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The theory of ruling
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THE THEORY
OF
RULING ELDERSHIP
EXAMINED

THE THEORY
OF
RULING ELDERSHIP

OR
THE POSITION OF THE LAY RULER IN
THE REFORMED CHURCHES

EXAMINED

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THE THEORY
OF
RULING ELDERSHIP.



THAT the association of the Laity with the Ministers of the Word and Sacraments in ecclesiastical councils and administration is both just and expedient, appears to be now generally admitted, even in those bodies in which the highest views have been entertained of clerical authority and power. There may be differences of opinion as to the mode and extent of such association, but few, we believe, will be found opposed to it entirely and in principle. It may be viewed by one class of minds mainly as a barrier to sacerdotal domination, by another as a security for the equity and acceptableness of ecclesiastical regulations, by a third as a link between the parochial clergy and

the people, or, finally, it may be regarded in its true light, as serving all these purposes at once ; but on one ground or other, all seem prepared to approve it.

We cannot, therefore, but consider it a subject of great regret that the valuable institution of lay councillors or rulers, as existing in the Reformed Churches, should have been exposed to attack and brought into discredit—nay, more, should have been, as we shall show, impeded in its working in some of these Churches themselves—by its connection with a specious theory, which, although resting on no formal ecclesiastical sanction, and long since abandoned as untenable by the most learned friends of the institution, is still reproduced from time to time in popular controversial works—the theory, namely, which classifies the lay rulers of Presbyterian Churches with the presbyters or elders, technically and properly so called, of the New Testament Church.

This theory has for its sole basis an inference from 1 Tim. v. 17 : “ Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine ; ” and we think it is to be deeply regretted that the illustrious Calvin, to whom the praise is in a great measure due of having restored the laity to a place in the administration of the Church, should have given currency, by the weight of his authority,

to the theory in question, and have applied this text to support it.

Nor is the regret lessened when we find that this great divine had previously based the institution of lay rulers on an unexceptionable foundation. In his 'Institutes' (b. iv. iii. 8*), after indicating the interchangeableness of the titles of bishop, presbyter, and pastor, he proceeds thus : " Here it is to be observed that we have hitherto enumerated those offices only which consist in the ministry of the word ; nor does Paul make mention of any others in the passage which we have quoted from the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. But in the Epistle to the Romans, and the First Epistle to the Corinthians, he enumerates other offices, as powers, gifts of healing, interpretation, government, care of the poor. As to those which were temporary, I say nothing, for it is not worth while to dwell upon them ; but there are two which

* The passage quoted appears for the first time in the edition of 1543, in which it stands c. viii. 42. The Commentary on the Epistles to Timothy appeared in 1556.

In the edition of the *Institutio* which forms vol. xxix. of the *Corpus Reformatorum*, published in 1863, the Strasburg divines, Baum, Cunitz, and Reuss, have rendered an inestimable service to those who desire to study with accuracy the history of theological literature. This admirably edited volume exhibits successively —I. The text of the *editio princeps* of 1536; II. That of the edition of 1539, with a synoptical view of the alterations introduced into the Strasburg editions of 1543 and 1545, and the Geneva editions of 1550, 1553, and 1554; III. That of the final edition of 1559.

are perpetual—government, and care of the poor. The governors I understand to have been *seniors selected from the people*, to unite with the bishops in the censure of manners and the exercise of discipline. For this is the only meaning that can be given to the passage, ‘He that ruleth with diligence.’* From the beginning, therefore, each Church had its senate, council, or consistory, composed of pious, grave, and venerable men, invested with that power of correcting faults of which we shall afterwards speak. Now, experience itself shows that this arrangement was not [to be] confined to one age; and therefore we are to regard the office of government as necessary for all ages.”

Here the institution of lay church rulers, similar to those of the Reformed Churches, is maintained on solid and reasonable grounds of Scripture and expediency, while the term presbyter is restricted, with those of pastor and bishop, to the ministers of the word. It is impossible to refrain from wishing that the illustrious author had been content to leave the office of lay assessors in church government on the foundation on which he has here placed it, and had not, in another part of his work,† and in his exposition of 1 Tim., weakened, while seeking to strengthen, that foundation, by

* Rom. xii. 8.

† B. iv. xi. 1. In the edition of 1543, in which the passage referred to first appears, it stands c. viii. 169.

classifying those assessors with presbyters. No one who is acquainted with the history of the branches and offshoots of the Reformed Churches, can be ignorant how much the acceptance of a valuable institution has been hindered by its connection with this unfortunate theory.

Surely a sufficient and indisputable Scripture warrant for the office in question, as bearing on church discipline, is afforded by the passages referred to in the foregoing extract, Rom. xii. 8, and especially 1 Cor. xii. 28, where we are told that "God hath set some in the Church," among whom, in addition to and after "teachers," are mentioned κυβερνήσεις, "governments." With such authority, in addition to that of common sense and expediency, it is scarcely necessary, however legitimate, to refer even to the analogical argument founded on the elders of the Old Testament Church.

Again, for the admission of the laity to the deliberative and legislative assemblies of the Church, a precedent is certainly to be found in Acts xv. 23, where "brethren" are expressly conjoined with the Apostles and the elders of the Church of Jerusalem; while the notices in the same passage of certain persons as "chief or leading men among the brethren," ἀνδρες ἡγούμενοι ἐν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς, and of the six brethren who accompanied the Apostle Peter from Joppa to Cæsarea to witness the first reception of the

Gentiles into the Church, and who afterwards attended him to Jerusalem,* with perhaps some other passages, exhibit the laity as taking a public and official part in the most important ecclesiastical affairs.

The position thus assigned to members of the laity in discipline and councils in the apostolic age, can be distinctly and incontrovertibly traced in the subsequent history of the Church. But the very passages appealed to as placing beyond doubt the existence in ancient times of functionaries corresponding in all practical respects to the lay assessors of the Reformed Churches, not only never, in any one instance, speak of them as presbyters, or elders proper, but almost invariably represent them as a class totally distinct. They prove the thing, but disprove the theory. To show this, we shall go over these passages in order.†

The first is that found in Origen. "They then introduce them, forming a class apart of those who have recently begun and been admitted, and who have not yet received the symbol of purification [baptism], and another of those who have, as far as possible, given proof of their resolution to act only in the manner approved by Christians; among whom [the latter] there are certain persons appointed to inquire into the lives and conversations of those who present themselves, in

* Acts x. 23; xi. 12.

† See Appendix, A.

order to prevent persons of infamous conduct from entering their assembly." In this interesting and valuable notice by one well acquainted with the practice of the Church in the early part of the third century, we have a clear proof of the existence of functionaries chosen from the general body of each congregation for the same purposes as our lay assessors, but nothing to lead us to suppose that these functionaries were regarded as presbyters.*

In the 'Gesta Purgationis Cæciliani et Felicis,'† A.D. 313-15, we find mention of *presbyteri, diaconi, et seniores*—"presbyters, deacons, and seniors."

On the ides of December A.D. 320, Nundinarius, a deacon of the Church of Cirta, brings certain charges against his bishop, Sylvanus, before an ecclesiastical assembly; and, appealing to those whom he addresses, as cognisant of the crimes charged against Sylvanus, says: *Quod omnes vos, episcopi, presbyteri, diaconi, et seniores, scitis*—"Which all of you, bishops, presbyters, deacons, and seniors, know."

In the letter of Purpurius, Bishop of Limata, to Sylvanus, in reference to the charges brought against him by Nundinarius, we have the following sentence: *Adhibete conclericos et seniores plebis, ecclesiasticos viros, et inquirent diligenter quæ sunt istæ*

* *Contra Celsum*, iii. 51. See Appendix, B.

† Appended to the Works of Optatus.

dissensiones, ut ea quæ sunt secundum fidei præcepta fiant—"Call your fellow-clergymen [the fellow-clergymen of Sylvanus and Nundinarius], and the seniors of the people, ecclesiastical men, and let them inquire diligently what these dissensions are, that those things may be done which are in accordance with the precepts of the faith." Among several letters in regard to the same matter is one addressed *clero et senioribus*,—"to the clergy and seniors;" and another, *clericis et senioribus Cirthensium*,—"to the clergymen and seniors of the Cirthensians."

If these quotations afford, as they certainly do, evidence of the existence of a class of assessors in church judicatures similar to those of the Reformed Churches, they contain proof equally decisive that these assessors were not presbyters, or elders in the true sense—the sense of the New Testament.

Dr Miller of Princeton, in quoting these passages, naively adds,—“If these are not the elders of whom we are in search, we may give up all the rules of evidence.” That they are the *officials* of whom the worthy writer is in search there can be no doubt, but certainly they are not what he, throughout his work, assumes these officials to be—elders in the sense of New Testament presbyters. They are not only presented to us as a class totally distinct from the presbyters, but they are separated from them by the intervention of the

deacons, who, not only in the New Testament but in all ages and churches, have ranked lower than presbyters. It may be added that, while Miller assumes, in the most extraordinary manner, the *seniores plebis* to be presbyters, he also assumes all the *presbyters* mentioned as existing in the early churches by Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Hippolytus, and others, to have been mere ruling elders in the modern sense, or members of session, in the face of the abundant evidence that they were ministers of the word and sacraments, and in oversight of the absurd consequence which must follow from his view, that even in the largest cities, in which there was but one church and bishop, there was no other minister of the word and sacraments but the bishop alone. In this double begging of the question—unheard of, we believe, till his time—he has been followed by one or two popular writers.*

It appears probable that allusion is made to a class of lay functionaries similar to ours in the passage of Optatus (A.D. 368), where it is said that “the Church had many ornaments of gold and silver, which she could neither bury in the earth nor carry away with her, and which she committed to elders [*senioribus*], as to trustworthy persons.†

We now come to the well-known passage in

* ‘Essay on the Nature and Duties of the Office of Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church.’ By Samuel Miller, D.D. 1831.

† “Erant enim ecclesiæ ex auro et argento quam plurima orna-

Hilary or Pseudambrosius :—" Old age is honourable among all nations ; whence it is that the synagogue, and afterwards the Church, had seniors, without whose counsel nothing was done in the Church ; which by what negligence it grew into disuse I know not, unless, perhaps, through the indolence or rather pride of the doctors, whilst they alone wished to appear something." If from this passage Presbyterian writers have endeavoured successfully, as is admitted by many learned men of other Churches, to prove the existence in ancient times of a class of councillors resembling our lay assessors, their opponents might, with equal success, have contended from it against the application to these councillors of the term presbyter. Let it be particularly observed that Hilary is here commenting, not, as has been sometimes represented, on 1 Tim. v. 17, but on 1 Tim. v. 1, and that he is speaking of old men, fitted by their age and experience for giving counsel, and not of presbyters or elders proper.

In Augustine (*Contra Cresconium*, iii. 56), A.D. 395, we find mention of *Peregrinus, presbyter, et seniores ecclesiæ Musticanæ regionis*—"Peregrinus,

menta quæ nec defodere terræ nec secum portare poterat. Quasi fidelibus, senioribus commendabat."—Optatus Milevit., 'De Schismate Donatist,' lib. i. p. 41, ed. Paris, 1631. On this passage Albaspinæus has the following note : "Præter ecclesiasticos et clericos, quidam ex plebe seniores et probatæ vitæ res ecclesiæ curabant, de quibus hic locus accipiendus est."—*Ibid.*, 123.

the presbyter, and the seniors of the Mustican district." Here we have certainly something exceedingly like a parochial minister and session; but the same clear distinction is maintained between the true and only presbyter, the minister of the word and sacraments, and the other class of functionaries, whom the Latin term *seniores* is again used to designate. In answer to the observation that *senior* is the Latin equivalent of the Greek term *presbyter*, it is surely sufficient, in arguing with any candid and unprejudiced person, to advert to the fact, that—although some instances may be produced in which *senior* is used as the equivalent of *presbyter*—in this passage, and in others above quoted, it is employed expressly for the purpose of distinction.

Again, in Augustine (Epistle 137) we find, *Dilectissimis fratribus, clero, senioribus, et universæ plebi ecclesiæ Hipponensis*. Here are seniors who are not of the *clerus*, but who are distinguished from the *universa plebs*, the body of the people.

The works of the same Father ('De Verbo Dom.' serm. 19) furnish us with another important notice: *Cum ob errorem aliquem a senioribus arguantur, et imputatur alicui de illis cur ebrius fuerit, cur res alienas pervaserit, &c.*—"When they are reproved for any fault by the seniors, and any one of them is charged with having been drunk, with having meddled with the property of others," &c.

Here again we have functionaries corresponding exactly to our modern lay rulers, but the same avoidance of the technical designation presbyter or elder.

Isidore of Seville (A.D. 600-636), in giving directions to pastors in regard to the instruction of their flocks, says: *Prius sunt docendi seniores plebis, ut per eos infra positi facilius doceantur*—"The seniors of the people are to be taught first, that by them such as are placed under them may be more easily instructed."*

Such are the passages usually quoted in proof of the existence, in the ancient Churches, of a lay assessorship. We consider them as placing the fact of its existence beyond question, but as equally proving that the assessors or seniors were not regarded as in any sense presbyters or elders in the New Testament acceptance of the term.

The discovery by Dr Claudius Buchanan of an order of principal or leading laymen—deputies or representatives of the people—in the Syrian churches of Malabar, in which there can be no doubt of its existence from the earliest times, is a remarkable corroboration both of the antiquity of the office and of the view of its nature which we maintain. These elders or representatives are totally distinct in designation from the presbyters,

* Isidor. Hispal. Sententiarum, lib. iii. cap. 43.

kasheeshas, and rank not with or even next to them, but after the *shumshanas* or deacons,*

Finally, passing by for a little the case of the Waldensian and Bohemian Churches, we may refer even to branches of the Church which had been completely merged in the Church of Rome, and almost entirely assimilated in polity to the rest of Western Christendom, for traces, existing down to modern times, at once of the participation of the laity by representation in ecclesiastical government and discipline, and of the entire distinctness of the representatives from the presbyters of the Church alike in theory and in practice. It is sufficient to allude to the questmen, sidesmen [synod's men] or *testes synodales*, and to the churchwardens of the English Church, by the former of whom the body of the people appeared and bore a part in discipline in the higher or diocesan, as they did by the latter in the parochial sphere.

The assertion that Calvin was the founder of an institution shown to have existed from the earliest times, is, we think, sufficiently disproved by the evidence we have produced. So far, indeed, is that assertion from the truth, that Calvin himself borrowed the institution from the Bohemian Church, in which it had, previous to his time, existed for two hundred years, and which appears

* 'Christian Researches in Asia,' pp. 116, &c.

to have received it from the Waldensian Church. What is true, however, in the matter, and what no doubt has given rise to the vulgar error in regard to it, is, that Calvin's adhesion to the new theory which classified lay rulers with the true presbyterate, and his application, in support of it, of 1 Tim. v. 17, were the great means of propagating that theory and interpretation in the Reformed Churches, in which his authority was deservedly very great. Even of the theory itself he was no more the author than of the institution. It had been broached before his time by Zwingle and Œcolampadius,* who both died in 1531, twelve years before the edition of the 'Institutes' in which Calvin first mentions it, and had been held by others at a period too early to allow of its being supposed that they had learned it from him. But it undoubtedly owed to his authority a wide acceptance and a permanence which it would never have derived from theirs, and may therefore be called his.

In estimating, however, the true value of that adhesion of Calvin to the theory before us, of which the influence was unquestionably very great,

* There seems no reason to doubt the authenticity of the passage quoted from Zwingle by Voetius in his 'Politicae Ecclesiasticae.' Yet it must be admitted to be scarcely in accordance with the following sentence in the works of the Reformer: *Scriptura alios presbyteros aut sacerdotes non novit quam eos qui verbum Dei annunciant.*—Zwinglii Opp. i. 105.

The opinion of Œcolampadius is distinctly expressed in a sentence of his oration pronounced before the senate of Basle in 1530.

two things are worthy of consideration, and have been too much overlooked.

Of these the one is the extent to which the circumstances in which he was placed may have unconsciously affected the opinions of even so masculine and acute and truth-loving a mind as that of the great Genevan Reformer. That he at times viewed the institution of lay rulers in the Church as resting on a broader, and therefore in reality, although not in appearance, stronger foundation, we have seen reason to believe. The experience through which he passed may account for a disposition at other times to strain and multiply the arguments in its favour. The great practical difficulty with which the early Reformers had to contend, was the establishment of moral discipline, and of an external authority by which it might be exercised, in the communities which had shaken off the spiritual domination of their former ecclesiastical rulers, and in which, while those who had received the truth in their hearts manifested its influence in a purity of life unknown under their previous bondage, too many showed a disposition to confound liberty with licence. Of the trials arising from this source no one, as is well known, had a greater share than Calvin. He had been driven from Geneva in 1538, with his colleagues Farel and Viret, because he refused to admit open profligates to the Lord's Supper ; and

often, after his recall, had had to contend with outbursts of rebellion against the restraints of ecclesiastical authority. It was not unnatural that, with such experience, Calvin should have been led at times and ultimately to view with favour a theory which appeared to place the authority of the lay assessors, to whom he looked for aid, on the highest possible ground.

It is, however, a most remarkable and significant fact—and this is the second consideration referred to—that, while sanctioning this theory, Calvin did not carry it out practically in the constitution framed by him for the Genevan Church. The assessorship under that constitution would appear, indeed, as if it had been moulded expressly with a view to discountenance the theory. So far from being a portion of the presbyterate, it has singularly little of an ecclesiastical air at all, and would probably be stigmatised, if proposed in the present day, as in no small degree Erastian. The Genevan Consistory, as framed by Calvin, was composed of two members of the Upper Council of the city, and ten of the Lower, or Council of Two Hundred, to whom six pastors were joined. The lay members were appointed annually, and had no ordination; and the whole body was presided over by one of the syndics or magistrates. There is a widespread popular impression, that in the organisation of the Church of Geneva the *beau*

ideal of Scottish Presbyterianism was exemplified. What would Scottish Presbyterians say to a Presbytery consisting solely of clerical members—for such was the Presbytery, or “Venerable Compagnie des Pasteurs,” of Geneva—and to the administration of church discipline for one of our cities by a Session of which the members should be chosen annually, two from the Town-Council, and ten from the Brethren of Guild? Yet such was Calvin’s Session. We have sought in vain for an explanation of the inconsistency between his own practice and the theory to which his name has given currency.

It is important, with a view to avoid confusion, to observe, that while Calvin avowedly derived from the Bohemian Church the institution of lay assessors, that Church, in turn, received from him the theory and the interpretation of 1 Tim. v. 17, by the adoption of which he had in his writings attempted to underprop it. Although the institution had existed among them from the time of Huss, a century before the birth of Calvin, the first instance, it is believed, in which they are found to speak of their lay rulers as presbyters, or to quote, in regard to them, the text in question, is in the Plan of Government and Discipline drawn up by their General Synod in 1616, and printed in 1632. In like manner, it is believed that in the Waldensian Church, although it

has had such assessors from time immemorial, no instance can be produced until after the time of Calvin, in which they are classified with presbyters. In the earliest notice of its ecclesiastical constitution, two classes of office-bearers are mentioned, *regidors del poble* and *preires in llocs officis*. The former is the designation of its lay church-rulers; and by the term *preires*, presbyters, are evidently meant the ministers of the word and sacraments. Like the Bohemian Church, the Waldensian appears to have gradually adopted the theory countenanced by Calvin.

While such was the case in the older communities, in which the institution of lay church councillors had previously existed, it is not to be wondered at that, in the newly-reformed branches of the Church, the name of Calvin, and, it may be admitted, the plausibleness and seeming naturalness of his interpretation of 1 Tim. v. 17, should have procured a ready and extensive acceptance of the theory. Nor is it surprising that the growth, in the Reformed Churches, of the Independent or Congregationalist party, and their democratical views of church government, should have induced Presbyterians to value even more highly than they might otherwise have done, an interpretation which seemed to place the authority of a select body of rulers on a definite scriptural

footing. It is, however, a great mistake to suppose that the interpretation and theory were accepted wherever the institution was adopted ; and it is impossible not to condemn the disingenuousness of representing, as some Presbyterian writers have done, all those divines who admit that the text in question shows some presbyters in the Apostolic Churches to have been principally occupied in teaching, and others in ruling, as coinciding in the opinion that there were therefore two such distinct classes of presbyters as the teaching and the ruling elders of Calvin. For, first, among these divines there are several Episcopalians, who regard the clause “ presbyters who rule well ” as descriptive not of such officials as Presbyterian lay rulers, but of those presbyters or bishops, *προεστῶτες*, who presided among their fellow-ministers, and, with some resemblance to the *ἀρχισυνάγωγοι*, superintended the whole of each church, regulating the teaching without necessarily or statedly teaching themselves ; and, secondly, others who admit, on the evidence afforded by the text, that some presbyters were statedly occupied in teaching, while some were chiefly employed in administration, regard the latter class as nevertheless invested with the full powers of the ministry, by an ordination in all respects the same as that of their brethren.

The theory which classes the lay rulers or councillors of the Church with the presbyters of the Apostolic Churches, and which claims support from 1 Tim. v. 17, appears untenable on the following grounds :—

I. There is no countenance whatever afforded elsewhere in Scripture to the idea, that any such strongly-marked difference as this theory implies existed, or was designed to exist, among the presbyters of the Church. Surely it is reasonable to suppose that some notice of such a difference would have been given in the passages of Scripture which relate expressly to the institution and duties of the presbyterate, and equally reasonable to infer, from the want of any allusion to it, that no such difference was contemplated or sanctioned. Now, neither in the passages which mention the ordination of presbyters “in every church,” and “in every city,” nor in those in which the qualifications and functions of presbyters are laid down, is the most distant intimation given, we do not say of a difference so wide as that in question, in the position and duties of members of the presbyterate, but of any difference whatsoever. That, in the circumstances of the early Church, in which the intellectual qualifications of those who were appointed to guide the young communities had not been in a measure equalised by previous training according to

any uniform standard, the presbyters should have in practice apportioned the various functions of their common office, with reference to the individual aptitudes found in them at their conversion, is only what was natural. But Scripture gives no hint of a deliberate and formal division of presbyters into two classes, designed to be permanently distinct in function or in dignity—the one authorised to teach publicly and to dispense the sacraments, the other invested with no right or authority, in these respects, beyond the other members of the flock.

2. The equality, *inter se*, of all presbyters, and the interchangeableness of the term *presbyter* with that of *bishop*, is now held by all. With Presbyterians this essential equality has always been a main point in argument with Prelatists; and, so far as the New Testament use of the terms is concerned, it is now admitted by all Episcopalians. It will therefore follow that the lay rulers of the Church, if presbyters, must also be bishops. To this plain and inevitable consequence the friends of the theory under discussion appear for some time to have been blind, or to have shut their eyes. Calvin, while maintaining the equality of all presbyters to each other and to bishops, invariably confines the term bishop to pastors or ministers of the word and sacraments; and the Second Book of Discipline, which first recognised in Scot-

land the theory of Calvin, follows him in this. But the inconsistency of first asserting, in the argument with Prelatists, the equality and convertibility of presbyter and bishop, and then restricting the title of bishop, as used in the New Testament, to a single presbyter among many in each parish or congregation, could not fail to be seen. The objection was obvious that, by the very parties who most strongly asserted the original equality of bishops and presbyters—nay, who went so far as to maintain that this original equality rendered any gradation of ranks among presbyter-bishops for ever, and in any circumstances, unlawful—a more important difference was really made between the bishop and the ordinary presbyter than was made on the highest Episcopal theory,—a difference not in grade merely, and in the sphere of jurisdiction, but in the very nature of the functions. For the presbyter is, on the Episcopal theory, as fully a minister of the New Testament, a dispenser of the word and sacraments, as the bishop, set apart, like him, from secular to sacred functions, and deriving his maintenance therefrom; whereas, on the theory which, while holding the lay ruler to be a presbyter, views the minister alone as a bishop, the presbyter has no part in the Gospel ministry at all. It is not easy to see how this objection can be answered. It is a strange thing that we should find ourselves under

the necessity of maintaining against Presbyterians the equality of the New Testament bishop and presbyter.*

It is plain that to all who hold, as must be done, the identity of the presbyter and bishop of the New Testament, and who further consider the lay rulers of modern churches to be true *presbyters*, the conclusion is unavoidable, that they must also be *bishops*. But consistency demands a still further advance. These lay rulers, if *bishops*, must also necessarily be *pastors*. The presbyters of the church of Ephesus, whom we hold to have been ministers, but who, on the theory under discussion, must have been in great part merely rulers, are not only styled bishops, but are expressly commanded to "feed" (*ποιμαίνειν*), that is, to do the work of pastors, to nourish with the only proper nourishment, that of the word and doctrine, the flock committed to their care.

Such are the contradictory but inevitable conclusions to which we are brought by the theory that the lay rulers of the Church are presbyters or elders in the Scripture sense. While, in fact, purely ruling functionaries, authorised to minister neither the word nor the sacraments, they must nevertheless be regarded, by those who hold that theory, as bishops and pastors; that is, as the very designation of pastor implies, as bound to feed the

* See Appendix, C.

flock by the ministration of the word ; in short, as at once ordained only to rule, and yet bound also to teach. By candid and unprejudiced minds, this will, we think, be regarded as a *reductio ad absurdum*.

It is curious to observe how, 'as discussions on church government arise and proceed after the time of Calvin, the holders of the theory are influenced by the sight of this awkward consequence. Some, with the inconsistency of which Calvin had set the example, but which in him was excusable, as it does not appear to have occurred to him, continue to restrict the terms bishop and pastor to the ministers of the Word. Others, when hard pressed in controversy, accept the consequences of their theory, but with apparent reluctance, and, as it were, to serve the turn ; for on other occasions they apply the titles of bishop and pastor to ministers alone. This is the case with such rigid theorists as Gillespie and James Guthrie. But from a very early period there appears to have existed among the more learned of the Reformed theologians a feeling of the insecurity and untenableness of Calvin's theory, which led, as we shall see, the Westminster Assembly, while deeply convinced of the value of the institution of lay rulers, and while maintaining it strongly on scriptural grounds, to abandon that theory.

3. The arguments already adduced surely authorise us in saying that something more is necessary than an inference from a single text to establish the theory before us. One thing, at least, may be fairly demanded—that the single text relied upon shall be found incapable of a fair and natural explanation more in accordance with the evidence which the rest of Scripture and the history of the early Church afford regarding church offices, before the interpretation, on which alone that theory is based, is forced upon us. Where the foundation is, as must in the present case be admitted, narrow in the extreme, it ought to be at least of unquestionable firmness.

Some of the interpretations which have been offered in opposition to that under consideration are, it must be at once allowed, worthy of little notice. The proposal to translate, as if *μάλιστα* followed instead of preceding *οἱ*, “those who labour chiefly or much in word and doctrine,” is altogether unwarrantable. The truth is, that the difficulty which has prompted such proposals is an imaginary one, and arises entirely from the overlooking of the true and emphatic import of *κοπιάω*, as implying not simply occupation in an employment, but sustained exertion, work persevered in to fatigue—*painstaking* labour. That this is the true import of *κοπιάω* is not only a natural inference from its etymology, but is proved by constant use.

This will hardly be questioned now by any competent and unbiassed critic. Even Beza, in commenting on the word as used in other passages, maintains this opinion. In his Annotation on Matt. xi. 28 he says, *Certe plus est κοπιᾶν quam ποιεῖν, si propriam utriusque significationem spectemus*; and there, as well as elsewhere (Matt. vi. 28, Luke v. 5), he objects to the translation of κοπιᾶω by *laboro* in the Vulgate and Erasmus, as too feeble, replacing it, in the latter instance, by *fatigati estis*. Stephanus also gives this as the sense of the word, translating the passage before us *plurimum laboris conferentes*. Schleusner says, *κοπιᾶω proprie de opera manuum dicitur, estque laboro, molestos labores tracto, quibus corpus defatigatur ac vires exhauriuntur*. Wiesinger too (1 Tim. iv. 10), explains κοπιᾶω as implying laborious work. With such authorities, and many others that might be quoted, we cannot hesitate to regard the following as the true sense of the passage: "Let the presbyters who preside well be counted worthy of double recompense, especially those who *are laborious* in preaching and teaching."

It has been said that, if κοπιᾶω had this emphatic meaning, the Apostle would never have found it necessary to increase the force of the word, as by the use of πολλὰ in Rom. xvi. 12 (ἥτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν). But surely there may be gradations in the severity, differences in the amount

and continuance, of even hard labour. Again, it is said that the Apostle would, had he meant what we believe him to have meant, have probably used such a word as *μολχθούνητες*. Our business is to ascertain the meaning of the terms which the Apostle *has* employed. We may, however, observe that the word suggested—which means, not merely hard, but excessive and exceptional labour, oppressing the body and mind with fatigue—would have been most inappropriate, as signifying much more than the Apostle had in view as the ordinary work of even the most active presbyters. *Κόπος*, the hard and fatiguing yet ordinary work of the husbandman, the Apostle could prescribe and provide for in the case of stated labourers in the spiritual vineyard; but *μολχθός* implies a degree and kind of toil which, although occasion might call for it in any Christian, could not be contemplated as the normal calling of any functionary.

No one who considers the nature and condition of the early Christian churches, will find any difficulty in understanding the import of this precept. The object for which the presbyters of these churches were ordained, was to exercise a joint spiritual superintendence over the infant communities. For this purpose each devoted himself more particularly to the special functions or department of duty for which his gifts best fitted him. It could not but happen that among them some

would be more occupied in the work of instruction and exhortation than others; but that all, as raised to one and the same position by one and the same ordination, had the same right to preach and teach, and perform all parts of the ministerial work, no one can doubt who reflects on the unartificial constitution of the new societies, and on the freedom with which not the presbyters only, but others upon occasion, were permitted to exercise in public the gifts vouchsafed to them for the benefit of their brethren. That this was the condition of the early churches, and the position of the presbyters, is the opinion of all the most learned who in recent times, and since the heats of controversy cooled down, have calmly considered the subject. They find no vestige of a classification of the presbyterate into those authorised to preach, and those not so authorised.

This brings us to the decisive argument against the inference drawn from this much-harassed text—an argument which is to be found, not so much in any particular explanation of its terms, as in comparing it with the plain injunctions of Scripture—nay, of the very epistle in which it occurs—in reference to presbyters. We grant, what we believe to have been the fact, that at the time when it was written, all who were qualified and ordained to be placed in charge of the early churches, were not alike endowed with gifts for public instruction

and exhortation. Let it be further admitted that, as a matter of fact, some presbyters may have borne part in the general administration of the churches, who did not preach. Nevertheless it stands on record, as the mind of the Spirit, that this was a provisional state of things, which was not intended to be continued; that, if tolerated for a time, while the want of aptitude for public exhortation in some presbyters was miraculously supplemented by occasional communications of special gifts of the Spirit to various members of the congregations, preparation must be made for a different condition of the Church, in which these miraculous endowments were to be withdrawn, in which the presbyters were to be the stated and constant instructors of the flock, and in which those officials, between whom there was, from the first, no inherent formal distinction, must be all alike διδασκτικοί, "apt to teach." To found a dogma, not to say a system, of church polity, on a state of matters caused by the peculiar circumstances and exigencies of the early churches, would be in any case a very questionable proceeding; but it is in the present case done in direct opposition to Scripture, which enjoins that all presbyters whatsoever be διδασκτικοί.

To meet this plain injunction with the assertion that those elders who are appointed to rule, *and not to teach*, who are selected without the slightest reference to a capacity for teaching, are neverthe-

less διδακτικοί, in the sense of being qualified to exhort privately, is an evasion which it is painful even to notice. There are not two definite classes of διδάσκαλοι or διδακτικοί, a public and a private, a superior and an inferior, mentioned in Scripture. It follows, then, that if the lay rulers in the Church are presbyters, they are presbyters of a kind not only unsanctioned, but directly disqualified by the Word of God! They are presbyters avowedly neither fitted nor authorised to do what all presbyters are required to be prepared to do, and which, therefore, must be regarded as a proper part of their office. Nay, the object of the Apostle, if we will candidly consider the matter, in this very text itself, which is quoted to prove that a permanent order of presbyters ruling but not teaching is to be maintained in the Church, is the very opposite. It is to bring about, as soon as possible, a different state of things from what then, through necessity, existed, and by securing double honour to such elders as laboured in word and doctrine, to hasten the time when all should, in point of fact, be teachers.

It certainly appears, on reflection, an extraordinary thing, first, that a text purely preceptive, and the precept in which is openly neglected by those who quote it, should be made so much of for a totally different purpose, as the basis of an ecclesiastical theory unrecognised elsewhere by

Scripture or antiquity; and, secondly, that its real ultimate purpose, to promote labour in word and doctrine on the part of *all* presbyters, should be lost sight of. Miller, who starts with the assumption that each of the apostolic churches was the exact counterpart of a single modern Presbyterian congregation, presided over by one minister of the word and sacraments (to whom he inconsistently restricts the term bishop) and a bench of ruling assessors, actually accounts (p. 103) for the disappearance of the ruling class of presbyters by saying that they assumed, *unwarrantably*, the function of teachers—*unwarrantably* did what the Word of God commands them to do! With good reason might Vitringa complain of the misleading influence of an existing order of things on our minds in the reading of Scripture. In the course of a full and able discussion of the text, which he views in connection with the invariable requisite, that presbyters should be διδακτικοὶ and ποιμένες, this very learned writer says, “St Paul, therefore, does not in this place refuse to any presbyters the right of teaching. He merely supposes that some do not teach. He wishes, however, that all should teach; nay, he stimulates and exhorts all to do so, when he declares those who teach to be worthy of double honour.” *

* ‘De Synagogâ Vetere,’ ii. 3, p. 493. “Non abnegat itaque Paulus, in hoc loco, ullis presbyteris docendi jus; solummodo

On these grounds alone, were there no other, we reject 1 Tim. v. 17, as having any bearing on the office in question, and along with it the theory of which it is the sole foundation, that the lay rulers of the Church are in the proper sense presbyters or elders.

The conclusion at which we have arrived was reached more than two centuries ago by many learned theologians, eminent for their attachment to the Presbyterian polity. Already in Britain, before the time of the Westminster Assembly, the authors of the memorable and able treatise published under the name of Smectymnuus, refraining from quoting "the three known texts of Scripture produced by some for the establishing of governing elders in the Church," and "the comment of Ambrose [Hilary] on 1 Tim. v. 1," maintain their position mainly by an appeal to the passages which we have cited above from the Fathers, and sum up the argument thus: "By all these testimonies it is apparent, first, that in the ancient Church there were some called *seniors*; secondly, that these seniors were not clergymen; thirdly, that they had a stroke in governing the Church, and managing the affairs thereof; fourthly, that seniors were distinguished

supponit quosdam non docere. Vellet tamen ut omnes docerent; immo vero incitat et exhortatur omnes ut doceant, quoniam eos qui docent maxime prædicat dignos duplici honore."

from *the rest of the people*." To any careful student of church history, it is unnecessary to indicate the import of the use in this passage of the term senior instead of elder.

But the opinion on the subject of the very erudite and zealous Presbyterian divines of England at this period is most strikingly and authoritatively shown by the proceedings and conclusions in regard to it of the Westminster Assembly, the significance of which has been too much overlooked. From the record of that Assembly left us by Lightfoot and Gillespie, we learn that the discussion on the point of lay elders, in the Grand Committee, commenced on the 12th of November 1643, and lasted, with some interruption, till the 11th of December, a period sufficient to show how carefully and anxiously it must have been conducted.* The subject was introduced for consideration by a proposition so framed as distinctly to bring under discussion, not merely the lawfulness and expediency of the institution, but the special theory of Calvin: "That besides those presbyters that rule well, and labour in the word and doctrine, there be *other presbyters* who especially apply

* Lightfoot, vol. xiii. p. 60-79; Gillespie's Notes, 4, 5. The prevalent ignorance or forgetfulness of the true import of the proceedings of the Westminster Assembly in reference to this subject, may be partly explained by the fact that Lightfoot's Journal of the Assembly was published for the first time only in 1825, and Gillespie's Notes only in 1846. See also Baillie's Letters.

themselves to ruling, though they labour not in the word and doctrine." The discussion which follows is instructive, and the result remarkable. While the Grand Committee declare unanimously in favour of the institution of lay rulers in the Church, they carefully exclude from their conclusion not merely the term *presbyter*, in reference to lay rulers, but even that of *elder*, as liable to be confounded with "presbyter," and refuse to quote 1 Tim. v. 17, in regard to the office. The conclusions of the Committee are recorded thus by Gillespie and Lightfoot:—

" 1. That Christ hath instituted a government and governors ecclesiastical in the Church.

" 2. That Christ hath furnished some in His Church with gifts for government, and with commission to execute the same when called thereunto.

" 3. That it is agreeable to and warranted by the Word of God that some others besides the ministers of the word be church governors, to join with the ministers in the government of the Church. Rom. xii. 7, 8 ; 1 Cor. xii. 28."

Some members had expressed a wish to rest the institution simply "on a prudential ground"—that is, on expediency—and some were opposed to the citation even of the two above-mentioned texts, although none except Dr Temple and Lightfoot voted for their being omitted. But the attempt of Whittaker and Gillespie, renewed the following day, to procure the citation of 1 Tim. v. 17

as applicable to the office of lay ruler, met with no success; and the conclusions of the Committee were sent in to the Assembly in the form in which we have given them above, with the following addition: "That in the Church of the Jews there were elders of the people joined to the priests and Levites in the government of the Church."*

The conclusions, or, as they were styled, "votes," of the Committee were brought up for the consideration and approval of the Assembly on the 14th November 1644, preparatory to their being transmitted to the Houses of Parliament; when, as Lightfoot tells us, "there fell a debate about naming church governors, whether to call them 'ruling elders' or no; which held a very sad and long discussion: at last it was determined by vote thus,—such as in the Reformed Churches are commonly called 'elders.'" Gillespie made a last attempt to obtain the recognition of the theory, and, with obvious purpose, moved that the Assembly itself should call them "ruling elders;" "but this," Lightfoot tells us, "prevailed not."† The battle of the presbyter theory had been fought and lost.

* It would have been well had the caution happily exercised by the Westminster Divines in the citation of Scripture in reference to church government been shown on other occasions. The craving for express Scripture warrant, in matters where common sense is a sufficient guide, was natural in the position of the Reformed Churches, but it led sometimes to an unjustifiable and even ludicrous straining of the Word of God.

† There is a blank in Gillespie's Notes, extending from the 25th October to the 15th November 1644.

The following is the chapter on the subject in the 'Form of Church Government' as finally authorised by the Assembly:—

"Other Church Governors.—As there were in the Jewish Church elders of the people joined with the priests and Levites in the government of the Church, so Christ, who hath instituted government and governors ecclesiastical in the Church, hath furnished some in His Church, besides the ministers of the word, with gifts for government, and with commission to execute the same when called thereunto, who are to join with the ministers in the government of the Church, which officers Reformed Churches *commonly call elders.*"

Nothing can be more significant than this sound and well-guarded language. Equally guarded and significant is that of the Confession of Faith in its allusion to lay rulers. It knows nothing of them as presbyters or elders in the proper sense. "As magistrates may lawfully call a synod of ministers, and *other fit persons*, to consult and advise with about matters of religion ; so if magistrates be open enemies to the Church, the ministers of Christ, of themselves, by virtue of their office, or they, with *other fit persons, upon delegation from their churches*, may meet together in such assemblies."

And, lastly, in the only allusion made to the

subject in its Directory for the Public Worship of God, the Assembly, under the head of the Lord's Supper, prescribes that the question of the frequency of its celebration may be considered and determined by the "ministers and *other church governors* of each congregation."

No doubt, we therefore think, can remain of the deliberate rejection by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster of 1 Tim. v. 17, as referring to the institution of lay rulers, and consequently of the theory of which it is the only foundation. That it was not intended even to leave the question an open one, may be seen by referring to the single instance in which the word "elder" is used in the section relating to the officers of the Church: "The office of the elder—*that is, the pastor*—is," &c. Let candid Presbyterians calmly consider this. The great Presbyterian Council of Britain, while distinctly asserting, and strongly maintaining, the right and the duty of the laity to take part in the government and discipline of the Church, recognises no "elder" as distinct from the preaching and teaching elder—no elder or presbyter in the proper sense, in the sense of the New Testament—but the minister of the word and sacraments.

The decisions of the Westminster Assembly on the Form of Presbyterian Church Government were, as is well known, after careful examination, solemnly approved and adopted by the General

Assembly of the Church of Scotland,* and the Commission of that body was authorised to "agree to and conclude, in the name of the Assembly, an uniformity between the Churches in both kingdoms in the above-mentioned particulars, as soon as the same should be ratified by Parliament."

This being the case, it may seem surprising that the theory we are discussing should still have held its ground in Scotland, after having been thus not only deliberately repudiated at Westminster, but formally denuded by the General Assembly of any authority it might have derived from the 'Second Book of Discipline;' and that it should have been so frequently reproduced in later times in popular works on church government. The explanation, we believe, is to be found in what the historian is so often called upon to observe—the vitality of terms, and their power to keep alive in the popular mind opinions with which they have once been associated. In the General Assembly and the other Courts of the Church of Scotland, the designation "ruling elder," introduced apparently by the 'Second Book of Discipline,' had become by 1645 the *vox signata* for the office, and had been rendered, by constant use, familiar to the people.† This designation, rejected at Westmin-

* Feb. 10, and Sept. 16, 1645; and, finally, Aug. 27, 1647.

† From the manner in which the 'Second Book of Discipline' is sometimes spoken of, it might be supposed to be a standard of the

ster, was, either from the force of habit, or perhaps because of the inconvenience of changing it, still retained in Scotland. That it should have been retained unconsciously is difficult to understand, when we consider the prominent part taken by Gillespie, one of the Scotch representatives at Westminster, in the discussion of the subject ; and yet that it should have been retained purposely cannot be supposed without a direct imputation on the good faith of the General Assembly. In retaining it, however, the Church of Scotland, it

Church, or a document possessing legal authority. But although the Act of 5th June 1592, which is, with the exception of the patronage clause, ratified by that of 7th June 1690, and which is therefore the law in regard to the government of the Church as now established, is often referred to as having “established the government of the Church, according to the ‘Second Book of Discipline,’” this statement is not quite correct. The Act 1592 does not embody, sanction, or even refer to, the ‘Second Book of Discipline,’ but merely, after ratifying and approving the yearly meeting of the General Assembly and the government of the Church generally, rehearses certain articles which had been “aggreit vpoun be his Maiestie in conference had be his Hienes with certane of the Ministrie, conuenit to that effect.” These articles define the “matters to be intreatit” in provincial assemblies, presbyteries, and sessions; and while, no doubt, they bestow legal sanction on a form of government practically and substantially such as is set forth in the ‘Second Book of Discipline,’ they carefully avoid, as does the Act 1690, all reference to, or sanction of, any particular *theories* as to church order or function. The theory, therefore, of the ‘Second Book of Discipline’ in regard to “ruling elders” has no sanction from the documents by which the Church is established; all that is required by law, and all that she has a right to require of her office-bearers, in regard to church polity, is practical acquiescence in, and conformity to, her *actual* government.

must be admitted, did not act in full accordance with its declared acquiescence in the Westminster decisions, and with its own professed desire for uniformity. The effect was that which in all probability the Westminster Assembly had desired to prevent. The use of the designation "ruling elder" kept the popular mind unavoidably directed to "the elders that rule well" of 1 Tim. v. 17, and maintained a measure of life in the theory, quietly buried at Westminster with the formal assent of the Scottish Church, which regards the lay rulers as a portion of the presbyterate. Add to this the convenience to popular controversialists of a plausible and portable argument such as the text in question, and the influence of the names by which the use of it had been sanctioned, and it is not difficult to understand how the theory should from time to time have raised its head again. A few of the stiff dogmatists in church government of the Beza and Melville school, such as James Guthrie, no doubt favoured this state of matters by reproducing, and even carrying to its most extreme, not to say absurd, consequences, a view which, if the arguments for the original equality of presbyters, as maintained in the Reformed Churches, have any validity at all, leads, as we have seen, to the confounding of the officers called elders with bishops and pastors. But the Church, apart from the misleading use of the term "ruling elder," has kept

itself, on the whole, guiltless of affording it any official recognition.

Let us now turn to the history of the presbyter theory in other countries, and in the hands of the great defenders of the Reformed principles of church polity on the continent of Europe. It is no dishonour to Britain to say that she has produced no Presbyterian writers in this department worthy of being compared with Blondel and Vtringa. Now, while it is admitted that some systematic authors of high repute continued, during the seventeenth century, to repeat, evidently without any special or original research, the division of presbyters into teachers and rulers, these two great divines, whose vast erudition included the most accurate, profound, and comprehensive view of church history and polity,—strongly impressed with the untenableness of that division, and feeling deeply the injury done to the doctrine of the original homogeneousness and parity of presbyters by a theory which divides presbyters into two most dissimilar classes,—while upholding the institution of lay assessors in church government, repudiate the notion of their being presbyters as totally destitute of foundation.*

* We do not quote here from Grotius, although the precursor, and, to say the least, the equal in many and the superior in other respects of the authors mentioned, as being in bad odour with some Presbyterians for Erastianism and latitudinarianism; but we will insert in the Appendix a few extracts from the passages in

Blondel, the chosen champion of Presbytery, equally admirable for his massive learning, his sound judgment, and his candour as a controversialist, in concluding the argument in his treatise ‘*De Jure Plebis in Regimine Ecclesiastico*,’ the object of which is to maintain, as he does most ably from Scripture and antiquity, the right of the laity to a part in the government of the Church, complains strongly of the evil done to the cause by the novelty of dragging the words of St Paul, in 1 Tim. v. 17, into the discussion. He declares the application of this text to the lay rulers of the Reformed Churches to be a thing unjustified by any example from early times, or by any necessity; and, after arguing against it fully and conclusively, says that the institution and functions of these officers, of whom he highly approves, must rest on other foundations—those, namely, which the practice of the Apostles and of the first ages of the Church has laid.*

which the results of his learned investigations are given. See Appendix, D.

* “Sine antiquorum exemplo et necessitate ullâ, Paulina verba, 1 Tim. v. 17, ad *seniores plebis*, cum episcopis et diaconis ad Ecclesiarum clavum sedentes, nonnullis trahere placuit.”

“Aliis igitur firmamentis, iis nimirum quæ nobis apostolorum primæque per trium sæculorum periodum antiquitatis praxis stravit, *seniorum plebis* institutio, et functio suæ (ut sic dicam) vitæ, a Protestantibus per Gallias, Scotiam, Belgium, restituta, statumanda est.”

The opinion of Scultetus, who discusses the question in his commentary on 1 Tim., is quoted by Vitringa, and Wolfius expresses

The opinion of Vitringa, whom we have already quoted, and who discusses the subject at great length, may be learned from the following extracts. Having maintained what he styles the essential homogeneousness and equality of the presbyter-bishops of the New Testament churches in opposition to the high prelatical theory, he proceeds thus :—

“ I am clearly of opinion that, from the testimonies above cited, we must in good faith infer not merely that in the earliest Church there were no bishops superior in grade to presbyters, but also that in that Church there were no presbyters or elders known different in office from others of the same order.”

He then adverts to the institution of lay rulers in the Reformed Churches, and to the theory of two classes of presbyters ; and although approving in the highest terms of the institution, regarding which he rejoices that the articles and formularies of his own Church speak with moderation, he goes on to say :—

“ I do not therefore condemn these lay elders. I acknowledge and approve them as highly as any one can do. Let me, however, without offence against the brotherhood to which I belong, distinctly declare that I find no presbyters

himself as agreeing with Vitringa.—‘*Curæ Philologicæ et Criticæ*,’ iv. 475.

or elders of this kind in the earliest Apostolic Church ; none even in the Church of the times following ; none in the writings of the Apostles, or in the monuments of subsequent ages, as far as they have been examined by me or by others. So long, indeed, have I been settled in that opinion, and so very fully have I been confirmed in it by the progress of time, that I do not think myself wrong in freely expressing it.

“It is certain and beyond doubt that, in the writings of the Apostles, the term ‘presbyter’ or ‘elder’ is exactly equivalent to that of pastor or bishop. It was the business of all presbyters or elders to feed the flock [as pastors or shepherds], and to watch over it [as bishops or overseers]. The Apostle Paul makes no distinction between a bishop and a presbyter, when speaking of their qualifications and ordination in 1 Tim. iii. and Tit. i. Elsewhere, as is well known, the constant duty of presbyters is expressed by the term ‘feeding the flock,’ without any variation whatsoever of meaning in that term ; for to feed is to teach, to admonish, to administer the sacraments, and to govern the flock with all the spiritual power bestowed by Christ on His ministers. No two meanings of the word—a more extended and a more restricted—are known in the writings of the Apostles, where it is used with reference to presbyters. Bishops, I say, presbyters and pastors, are, in the style

of the Holy Scripture, to which we must pay close attention in this discussion, one and the same order of men, differing neither in degree and kind, nor in function. This position will stand, I think, as long as there shall be persons who will read the Acts of the Apostles without previous bias. And if it stands, then the lay presbyters fall to the ground. Pray, shall we dare to assert and maintain that the title of bishops, the title of pastors, is applicable to these lay presbyters? If we do not, there is certainly an end of such ‘presbyters;’ for no presbyters were known or set up in the Church by the Apostles, who were not at the same time pastors and bishops.

“Let us observe—although the thing is too well known to deserve the name of an observation—that Paul, when proceeding to enumerate, in his First Epistle to Timothy, the offices to be executed in each church of his time, mentions only bishops and deacons. Calvin recognises three orders of ministers of the Church; Paul only two. In which of the two orders will you include lay presbyters? In that of bishops? I hardly think that any man who understands the meaning of the term bishop, as used by Paul, and who knows that these lay presbyters of ours were introduced into the Church for scarcely any other purpose than to temper the power of the minis-

ters of the word, will seriously venture to call them so. And yet, he who maintains this hypothesis, must either add these lay elders to the order of bishops, or determine that the Apostle Paul, while enumerating church offices, as he here sets himself carefully and designedly to do, has passed them by unnoticed. How bold a saying this would be, any one may easily perceive, without a word from me."

He then proceeds to show at length the total absence in Christian antiquity of any allusion to elders or presbyters other than ministers of the word ; and, having done so, he refers to the official position of the *seniores plebis* in some ancient churches, as at once a conclusive evidence and a most worthy precedent in favour of the *institution* (institutum) of lay assessors of such a kind as exist in modern Reformed Churches ; but he remarks, in regard to them, not only that these functionaries were never reckoned presbyters, but that they were always mentioned after the deacons, and that "care was taken that they should not be called presbyters, lest any one should ignorantly confound them with the elders or presbyters mentioned in Scripture, but *seniores* and *γέροντες*." *

Such being the opinions on this point of the great and learned defenders of Presbyterianism

* 'De Synagogâ Vetere,' ii. 3, 482-510. See Appendix, E.

on the Continent in the seventeenth century, let us now, before returning to our own country, examine another class of writers—those, namely, in foreign lands, who in our own times have made the constitution and history of the early Church the subject of special study, and of original and critical investigation. We cite none, except such as, either from ecclesiastical connection or avowed conviction, view favourably the original Presbyterianism of the Church, or whose character for candour and freedom from prejudice on the subject is beyond question.

Foremost in these, as in many other respects, we may place Neander. His view on this subject is clear. While admitting the fact, that among the presbyters intrusted with the charge of each Christian community at its first formation, all were not alike qualified to teach, or equally employed in teaching, he refers to the qualifications of all elders or bishops, as laid down in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, as certainly implying that they ought all to be teachers, and to possess the gift of teaching.*

Gieseler † speaks of the division of presbyters into *docentes* and *regentes* as a theory of Calvin; and refers to Vitringa, Neander, and Rothe for the demonstration of its unsoundness.

* 'General History of the Christian Religion and Church,' I. ii.

† 'Ecclesiastical History,' i. sec. 30.

Hase,* referring to the notices of the *seniores plebis* in the African Churches, does not find in them any proof of ruling, as distinct from teaching, *presbyters* or *elders* (these officials not being presbyters or elders at all in the proper sense), but relics evidencing the original right of the laity to a voice in the administration of the Church.

Schaff† says, "The presbyters were, at the same time, the *regular* teachers of the congregation, and can therefore not be put in the same class with the lay elders of Presbyterian Churches. On them devolved *officially* the exposition of the Scriptures, the preaching of the Gospel, and the administration of the sacraments."

Again, "These passages [Heb. xiii. 7 and 17; 1 Tim. iii. 2] forbid our making two distinct classes of presbyters, of which the one, corresponding to the seniors or lay elders in the Calvinistic Churches, had to do only with government, and not at all with the administration of doctrine and the sacraments." While admitting

* 'History of the Christian Church,' I. ii. 58.

† 'History of the Apostolic Church,' B. iii. 133. Competent judges will, we think, agree in considering this work of Schaff's deserving of the character given it in the 'Biblical Repository:' "Eminently scholarlike and learned, full of matter—not crude materials, but various and well-digested knowledge—the result of systematic training and long-continued study." Bunsen, in his 'Hippolytus,' styles it "worthy of a scholar and a disciple of Neander."

that the institution of lay rulers "rests on a very judicious ecclesiastical policy, and is, so far, altogether justifiable," he says, "The only passage appealed to in support of it [the distinction of the order of presbyters or elders proper into teachers and rulers] is 1 Tim. v. 17—'Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.' This 'especially,' we are told, implies that there were presbyters also who officially had nothing to do with teaching, and that the teaching presbyters were of higher standing. But this conclusion is by no means so sure as may at first sight appear. For, in the first place, it is questionable whether the emphasis does not rather fall on *κοπιῶντες*, referring to *laborious diligence* in teaching, as also on the *καλῶς* in the beginning of the sentence, making the antithesis to be, not that of teaching and ruling elders, but that of those who rule well and teach zealously, and those who both rule and teach indeed, but without any particular earnestness. In this view, the passage would tell rather for the union of ruling and teaching in the same office. But even according to the other interpretation, it proves at best only the fact that there were presbyters who did not teach. It by no means shows that the existence of such presbyters was regular, and approved by the Apostle, which is here the main point. Nay,

unless we would involve Paul in self-contradiction, we must suppose the very opposite. For in 1 Tim. iii. 2, Tit. i. 9 (compare 2 Tim. ii. 24), he makes aptness to teach an indispensable qualification for the office of bishop [elder] without exception."

The same author, in another work,* has the following passage—"Bishops or presbyters: these two terms denote in the New Testament the same office, the first signifying its duties, the second its dignity. The presbyters were the regular overseers, teachers, and pastors of the several congregations, intrusted with the direction of public worship, the administration of discipline, the cure of souls, and the management of church property. We find them always in the plural as a college, at Jerusalem, at Ephesus, at Philippi, and at the ordination of Timothy. As to the mutual relations of the members of the presbytery, the division of labour among them, the nature and term of their presidency, the New Testament gives us no information." "The distinction of teaching presbyters or ministers proper, and ruling presbyters or lay elders, rests on a single passage (1 Tim. v. 17), which unquestionably admits a different interpretation; especially since Paul, in the same epistle (iii. 2), expressly mentions ability to teach among the requisites for the episcopal or presbyterial

* 'History of the Christian Church,' I. par. i. § 42.

office." In a subsequent paragraph (§ 43) the same author finds, in the mention made by the Apostles and elders of "the brethren," and in other passages, "a plain proof of the right of the Christian people to take part in some way in the government of the Church, as they do in her worship. The spirit and practice of the Apostles thus favoured a *certain kind* of popular self-government, and the harmonious fraternal co-operation of the different elements of the Church." "The Council of Jerusalem, though not a binding precedent, is a significant example, giving the Apostolic sanction to the synodical form of church government, in which all classes of the Christian community are represented in the management of public affairs."

De Pressensé * "finds not a vestige in the Apostolic Church of two classes of elders;" and, alluding to Calvin's classification, says, "This idea has no scriptural foundation. No such line of demarcation is anywhere drawn between two orders of elders. The passage, 1 Tim. v. 17, proves nothing in regard to this. It forms part of an epistle of which the leading idea is anxiety in regard to false doctrine, and in which capital importance is thus given to *teaching*. There is no trace in it of an ecclesiastical polity."

Miller, in the introduction to his singularly illo-

* 'Histoire des Trois Premiers Siècles de l'Eglise Chrétienne,' ii. p. 233.

gical essay, addressing his brethren of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, acknowledges that "some of them do not concur with him in maintaining the *divine authority* of the office of ruling elder." He would have been equally right had he added that not some only, but a very great number, who admit that there is scriptural authority for such a representation of the laity as the office practically affords, utterly repudiate his mode of proving this, and his idea that the assessors who represent the laity in church-sessions and other courts, are, in the proper sense, presbyters or elders. In fact, the publication of his treatise was quickly followed by, if it did not call forth, that of others in the same country, in which that theory is rejected and disclaimed. We shall cite three among the most eminent defenders of Presbyterianism who have appeared in America since that time.

Dr J. P. Wilson, in his 'Primitive Government of Christian Churches'—a work in high esteem as evincing great and original research—confidently declares, after a careful examination of all the Fathers of the first six centuries, that they never in any case refer to an order of men similar to our ruling elders under the term *presbyters*.*

Barnes, the able defender of Presbyterianism

* 'Primitive Government of the Church,' Philadelphia, 1833, p. 372.

against Onderdonk, in his commentary on 1 Tim. v. 17, says, "It cannot, I think, be certainly concluded from this passage that the ruling elders who did not teach or preach were regarded as a separate class or order of permanent officers in the Church;" and clearly indicates that he holds the same view with Neander as to the office and functions of the presbyters of the early Church.

Lastly, we may refer to Smyth of Charleston, whose work on Presbytery, reprinted in this country, contains a wonderful mass of information and argument in opposition to High-Church Prelacy. His opinion on the subject before us is expressed strongly and decidedly, as that of one who has felt deeply the injury done to the cause he has expended great labour in defending, by the theory in question. "This view of the passage (1 Tim. v. 17) we are constrained," he says, "to reject, for many reasons. We do not think there is any evidence whatever that our ruling elders are in any case alluded to in Scripture under the term 'presbyters' or 'elders.' These titles are, we think, in all cases employed to denote teachers or ministers. The same is true of the *usus loquendi* of the Fathers. With them also the term presbyter is employed to denote the order of teacher, not the order of ruling elder. This latter office they certainly refer to, but it is under the terms *senior* and *seniores plebis*."

“The officers now *called* ‘ruling elders’ are still to be regarded as scriptural and proper. They are spoken of in Scripture, although not under the title of presbyters. Christ, as we have seen, delegated all power to the body of the Church. But as all cannot be officers, and as all cannot meet to transact business, they must act by delegated officers, that is, by ruling elders, who are, as our standards teach, the representatives of the people. We find, therefore, that such officers sat with the Apostles and presbyters in the councils of the Church as delegated commissioners, under the title of ‘the brethren.’ Acts i. 15-26, vi. 1-6, and xv.”*

Returning to the subject in a note at the end of his work, Smyth refers to numerous learned Presbyterian writers who agree with him, and concludes his observations with the following just remark—“The whole burden of proof, therefore, rests on those who generalise the term presbyter so as to include ‘ruling elders.’ The presumption is entirely against them. And solid proof they ought assuredly to bring forward before confounding Scripture statements and terms, so as to make them mean nothing in particular, and to have no special or official application, and thus involving us in the absurdity that all ruling elders are bishops and teachers, and are, as they must therefore neces-

* Smyth on Presbytery. Ed. Collins, Glasgow, p. 124.

sarily be, entitled to preach, to administer the sacraments, and to ordain."

Before closing this review of the history of the question, it may be of importance to show that—to whatever extent the theory under discussion may have survived, in the popular mind, in Scotland, the renunciation of it involved in the adoption by the General Assembly of the Westminster conclusions in 1645, and may have been kept alive by the incautious use of terms and by popular writers—it has been treated, not merely as ecclesiastically unauthorised, but as untenable, by the most eminent writers in the several departments of ecclesiastical and theological literature. We shall cite four of these: Jameson, Wodrow, Campbell of Aberdeen, and Hill of St Andrews.

Let us listen first to Jameson of Glasgow, the learned author of '*Verus Patroclus*,' '*Nazianzen Querela*,' '*Roma Racoviana*,' '*Cyprianus Isotimus*,' &c., a man whose attachment to Presbyterianism was as ardent as his erudition, in spite of blindness, was unquestionable :—

"Nor had the people interest and power only in the calling of their bishop or pastor ; but also, in the management of other affairs of the Church, they could by themselves, or which is much more convenient and commodious (as is now proved), by their seniors, their delegates, and representa-

tives, preserve their sacred liberties from the clergy's encroachments." "And those seniors or ruling elders they justly believed to be of divine right." "F. S. spends his whole eighth chapter against this worshipful order (as he scornfully terms ruling elders), and yet the only noticeable argument he advances against them is, in sum, this : that the asserting of them is not consistent with the Presbyterian doctrine of the dichotomizing the church officers.* 'G. R. himself,' saith he, 'will not allow them to be sought for among the deacons ; and no man has said—G. R. himself will not say—that his ruling elders are of the same order with pastors.' But this argument quite evanishes if we repute that those elders are the representatives of the *Sacra Plebs* or of the Church, as it is opposed unto or distinguished from church officers properly so called—bishops or pastors, and deacons ; and therefore that they are not, in a strict sense, church officers. For I am so well assured of this truth, that only bishops or presbyters and deacons are, in a proper and strict sense, church officers, that if anything I ever said can be proved to contradict this, I willingly revoke and retract it." He then refers to Blondel's view as similar to his own.†

* The doctrine that only two orders of church officers are of divine right—viz., presbyter-bishops and deacons.

† Jameson, 'Cyprianus Isotimus.' See also his 'Sum of the Episcopal Controversy,' I. iv. 40 ; and Appendix, F.

The opinion of Wodrow is given in a letter to a friend who had applied to him for information and advice in the prospect of being appointed to the office of the eldership. In this valuable letter, which Dr M'Crie the editor justly styles judicious, the author enters into the subject at great length, and, while expressing a very strong conviction of the scriptural warrant for such an office, rejects 1 Tim. v. 17 as not applying to it:—"First, I must lay it down as the foundation of all, that ruling elders are indeed instituted by Christ, the Apostle of the New Testament Church, as officers of the Church and house whereof He is the head. I need not prove this. I freely own to you that the arguments drawn from the Old Testament have not that weight with me with respect to this or any other New Testament office that I find they have with some others; and the place most insisted on, 1 Tim. v. 17, is so vexed by criticisms on both hands, that reading on it long since rather shoke than settled me as to this office. The place that mainly settled me was Acts xv. 23, upon which you know my sentiments. And, besides, the first and pure antiquity seems to be very plain for some share in rule to the representatives of the people; and the nature and privileges of believers under the New Testament go pretty far to convince me of the reasonableness of this office. The main difficulty," he adds, "to me anent this office is the

argument from the dichotomy that Paul in his epistles insists so much upon—bishops and deacons.”* In another letter, addressed to Jameson, dated July 2, 1713, he says, with reference to an occasion on which he had admitted some elders in his parish, “I preached upon Acts xv. 23, as the most convincing place to me as to the foundation of these officers.”†

The number, we have reason to believe, is not small of those who, like the worthy pastor of Eastwood, have been “rather shoke than settled” by having their minds brought fairly into contact with the overloaded text from 1 Timothy. Candid and scholarly men, on turning to it naturally as the basis of a discourse on the occasion of the admission of elders in their congregations, have found themselves in no small degree perplexed, and have been compelled, like Wodrow, to retreat to safer and more general ground, such as Acts xv. 23, the lay elders of the Jewish dispensation, and the voice of history and expediency.

We now come to the illustrious and learned antagonist of Hume, who stands unrivalled in Scotland as a Biblical critic. In his sixth lecture on Ecclesiastical History, Dr Campbell gives the following full and unambiguous statement of his views :—

* Wodrow's Correspondence, i. p. 179. Nov. 29, 1710.

† Ibid., p. 475.

“ It has, in modern times, been made a question whether the presbyters, even exclusive of their president, could all come under one denomination ; or whether some of these were properly pastors and teachers, and others only assistants in matters of government and discipline. Some keen advocates for presbytery, as the word is now understood, on the model of John Calvin, have imagined they discovered this distinction in these words of Paul to Timothy,—‘ Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.’ Here, say they, is a twofold partition of the officers comprised under the same name into those who rule and those who labour in the word and doctrine—that is, into ruling elders and teaching elders. To this it is replied, on the other side, that the *especially* is not intended to indicate a different office, but to distinguish from others those who assiduously apply themselves to the most important, as well as the most difficult, part of their office, public teaching ; that the distinction intended is therefore not official but personal ; that it does not relate to a difference in the powers conferred, but solely to a difference in their application. It is not to the persons who have the charge, but to those who labour in it, οἱ κοπιῶντες. *And to this exposition, as by far the most natural, I entirely agree.* What was affirmed before, in relation to the coincidence

of the office of bishop and presbyter, from the uniform and promiscuous application of the same names and titles, may doubtless be urged in the present case with still greater strength. The distinction is too considerable between a pastor and a lay elder, as it is called, to be invariably confounded under a common name. When the character of such as are proper for the office of elder is pointed out by Paul to Timothy, apt to teach, or fit for teaching, *διδασκτικός*, is mentioned as an essential quality ; and though the words be different in the charge to Titus, the same thing is implied, *ἵνα δυνατός ᾖ καὶ παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ, καὶ τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν*, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. This is spoken indiscriminately of all who were proper to be nominated bishops or elders, which we cannot suppose would have been done, if some of them were to have no concern in teaching. We find no such quality among those mentioned as necessary in deacons. And a dubious, not to say forced, exposition of a single passage of Scripture is rather too small a circumstance whereon to found a distinction of so great consequence. If, therefore, it were only from this passage that an argument could be brought for the admission of those denominated laymen to a share in the management of church affairs, I, for my part, should most readily acknowledge that

our warrant for the practice would be extremely questionable."

Finally, we may cite Principal Hill of St Andrews, an author remarkable for comprehensiveness of view and sound judgment. Dr Hill plainly intimates that even the three texts commonly adduced for the purpose may seem, when taken by themselves, to afford a slender or doubtful foundation for the opinion that, in the days of the Apostles, there were ruling presbyters distinct from preaching presbyters; and then, with characteristic judiciousness, proceeds to show the authority afforded for the admission of representatives of the laity into church courts by an enlarged view of the history of the Church, and the great practical value of the institution.* When it is considered that the theory under discussion can claim the countenance of one only of the three texts above referred to, we must infer that Hill viewed that theory with little favour.

These quotations might probably be enlarged, but, for the purpose we have in view, it is surely unnecessary. The authors we have referred to are representative men in their several walks of ecclesiastical literature—men to whom, in their special departments, no Scottish Presbyterian writers during the last 200 years can be equalled, if compared. Jameson's is the only name known

* 'Theological Institutes,' ii. 2.

among us during that period, except Campbell's, for original study of the constitution and history of the Church at its sources. In acquaintance with the special history of Presbyterianism, and in zeal for its distinctive theories, we have no equal to Wodrow, whose name has, in fact, from this very circumstance, been adopted as the designation of a society formed for the republication of the old Presbyterian literature of Scotland. Of Campbell and Hill it is unnecessary to speak. Let it be observed also that the quotations we have made from these authors are not hasty and casual expressions, but the deliberate conclusions of very able and conscientious men, whose minds were fully directed to the subject. We may therefore conclude that the theory which classes lay assessors in church courts with elders or presbyters in the strict and proper sense, and which claims support from 1 Tim. v. 17, can plead almost as little the countenance of competent individual opinion as it can any public authority since 1645.

It may be asked, *Quorsum hæc?* Is it the object—may it not at all events be the tendency—of this discussion, to weaken the position and influence of the lay element in the Church? We reply, first, that the ascertainment and maintenance of the truth in all things, especially in matters relating to religion and the Church, is our plain duty, irre-

spective of consequences; and secondly, that even at the risk of the consequence apprehended, the cause of the Reformed polity in its great principles imperatively demands that it be disembarassed of a theory which is repudiated by its most learned friends as unjustified by Scripture and antiquity, which lays it open to the charge of straining the Word of God, and which, by involving it in confusion, self-contradiction, and absurdity, shakes its very foundations.

But, in reality, so far from either contemplating or apprehending any result prejudicial to the lay element, our very object is to promote its efficiency where it exists, and its extension where it does not; and these ends, we are persuaded, may be most efficiently secured by placing it in its true light and on its proper basis. Both, it is to be feared, have been greatly impeded by the theory in question. We have no doubt that the presbyter theory of the lay assessorship, apart from the injury done by it in other respects to the cause of the Reformed polity, has hampered and paralysed the very institution which it might be supposed to strengthen. Those men who by character and intelligence are best fitted to serve the Church in that office, are those also most conscientiously desirous to have clear and definite views of their position and duties. Such persons, referring to Scripture for instruction, are inevitably directed, by the popular

theory of their office, to the passages in which a definite account of the qualifications of presbyters is given. They are perplexed by seeing no instructions in those passages for such a special class as that to which they are represented as belonging, and they are repelled by finding that aptness for teaching, and for maintaining the truth in controversy, occupies a prominent place in the qualifications required in *all* presbyters, and that (in perfect consistency, it must be allowed, with the theory) they are in some places expected to exhort and to pray publicly—not as Christian men suitably endowed may upon occasion laudably and profitably do—but in an official manner, and as under official obligation and engagement to do so. There are many who would feel that they occupied an intelligible and honourable position if, as laymen, the recognised chiefs and representatives of their brethren, they were permitted to lay upon the altar such gifts as they possess—who would gladly bring both to the local administration, and to the more general councils of the Church, the precious contributions of sound judgment, wholesome influence, practical knowledge of men and things, and earnest, honest, gratuitous zeal ; but who, when they are desired to assume the guise and obligations of presbyters or bishops of a mutilated and inferior order, for whose guidance Scripture gives no instructions, and which popular opinion subjects in an indefinite

degree to the responsibilities and duties of the presbyterate, are confused and hesitate. The consequence is, that the community loses the important services they are able and willing to render, by imposing on them a character and functions which they do not feel warranted to assume.

Fortunately, in most cases, the purely lay aspect which the institution actually presents, overbears in practice the evils of the theory. Were the theory honestly followed out, and the precept in 1 Tim. v. 17 obeyed, the ruling elders ought to be stipendiaries of the Church, as uniformly if not so liberally maintained by it, as the ministers of word and sacraments. The administration of the Church would then be entirely in the hands of a professional class, and the inestimable benefits resulting from the presence in her councils of those having no interests or bias apart from the body of the Church members, would be lost.* The great and peculiar value of the lay assessors arises from ignoring entirely

* Even Gillespie, the champion at Westminster of the theory combated in these pages, appears to see, when contemplating the matter from a different point of view, the justice and importance of a representation of the laity, *as such*, in the courts and councils of the Church, and maintains the necessity for the functionaries *called* ruling elders, on that very ground. "Our divines," he says, "prove against Papists that some of those whom they call laics ought to have place in the assemblies of the Church, by this argument, among the rest, because otherwise the whole Church could not be thereby represented."—"Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland," i. 10.

the precept contained in the verse on which the theory respecting them is based. While styled presbyters, they are inconsistently but most happily viewed, by themselves, and for the most part by others, as what they really are—laymen to all intents and purposes, identified with their brethren in the ordinary walks of life. In this, we say, lies their great value, and we cannot look with favour upon a theory which, if consistently carried out, would rob us of so inestimable a boon.*

But if the theory we have been discussing impairs the efficiency of the office of lay councillor in these religious communities in which that office exists, its rejection is also desirable with a view to the general, cordial, and regular admission of the laity, throughout all the other branches of the Church, to that position and voice in ecclesiastical administration which their just rights and the good of the body of Christ alike demand. Surely the visible Church is not to remain always in its present divided condition; but that any united or uniform—we may go further, and say any efficient—Church organisation should ever be formed, in which that position and voice should be withheld, is plainly impossible. In fact, in no branch of the Church is the laity, even now, absolutely and in theory unrepresented. In the Church

* See Appendix, G.

of England there are, as we have seen, "footsteps" of lay rulers in the churchwardens, in the dormant office of sidesmen, and in the lay judges of the ecclesiastical courts. In the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, the admirable constitution of which combines the advantages of Presbytery and Episcopacy, the lay element is represented and employed in a most wise and efficient manner in the councils, at least, of the Church.* The Congregational Independents, who, whatever may be the faults of their polity, have by their doctrine and their lives done much for the cause of truth and righteousness, would, it is believed, in many instances, although adhering in principle to their fundamental tenet in church government, be found not unwilling, like their forefathers at Westminster, to devolve, to some extent, the power which they hold to be in the whole congregation, on a selected body or session, provided this were proposed to be done "on a prudential ground," and not in connection with the figment of ruling presbyters. In the present condition of Independency, the real power and usefulness of the lay element are impaired by its excess. Nowhere is that element so fully, so rationally, or so beneficially represented and employed in promoting the purity and life of the community, as in Presbyterian Churches; and yet this special excellence of their organisa-

* See Caswall's 'America and American Church.'

tion, instead of commending itself to the imitation of other Churches, has been rendered distasteful by its connection with an unfortunate name and theory. Abandoned as that theory is by the learned, and destitute of authority, it is to be hoped that Presbyterians will cease from clogging, as they do, by maintaining it, an institution which is, and might be even more than it is, their strength and glory.

It would be a mistake to infer, from what has been said regarding the theory of the office under discussion, that any material change of a practical kind is desired or desirable in that office as existing in Presbyterian Churches. No such result was thought of by the learned divines who have endeavoured to rectify the erroneous ideas entertained as to the basis on which it rests. The view which, with them, we believe to be the only tenable one, leaves the mode of choosing the lay councillors of the Church, the securities to be required for their soundness in the faith, the formalities of their appointment, and the conditions of their continuance in office, to be arranged on considerations of Christian expediency. Such considerations may sanction or require a diversity of arrangement in regard to these matters in different communities. But when all the objects of the institution are taken into view, no system of arrangements ap-

pears, as a whole, better adapted to promote these objects, than that which exists in the Church of Scotland; and although the term *ordination*, vulgarly employed to designate the formal installation of members of the parochial council, is, in the technical sense, inconsistent with the true view of their position as *seniores plebis*—the representatives of the *unordained* members of the Church, as distinct from its professional functionaries—and is therefore apt to mislead; yet nothing can be more proper, in every point of view, than the customary solemnity of admitting them to their important duties with public prayer.

It may be thought that, if the true position of the officials under consideration be what we have maintained it to be, they ought, as a consequence, to be appointed to office by the whole body of the laity, and not, as is usual in the Church of Scotland and some other Presbyterian Churches, by co-optation—that is, by selection on the part of the existing Session. But this by no means follows. As laymen, they are representatives, in the administration of the Church, of the interests and feelings of their peers, whether chosen directly by the whole body of the laity, or by those who have themselves been set up as “chief men among the brethren,” and who, as a general rule, will be found better judges of character and qualification for the office, more deeply interested in the good

and peaceful management of the parish or congregation, and certainly far less subject to undue influences, than most of the ordinary members. It is a coarse conception of freedom, though common in the present day, which regards it as diminished in value or endangered, unless the hand and voice of the whole community are officially active at every turn. If there be one lesson more distinctly taught than others by Scottish Church history, it is how much tyranny may at times be veiled under democratic forms and watchwords. There are cases in which, under a system of popular election, the consciences of the humbler members of a congregation must be subjected to cruel violence. A landlord, a large employer of labour, or a local demagogue, whom no wise or right-minded Session would think of adding to its number, might be forced into it by those who, though knowing the man's unfitness for the office, could not refuse him their votes.

We should gain little by escaping the discredit and embarrassment of a false theory, if we were to give ourselves up, without judgment or consideration of circumstances, to the most extreme inferences that may be drawn from a sound one. The great rule, the supreme law of church polity, is, that all things be done with a view to edification, decently and in order; and although there may be communities in which this may be best accom-

plished by a direct popular choice, or where that mode of choice may be unavoidable, or where it may be attended with little danger to the peace and unity of congregations, we believe that selection by the existing Session, which (while giving greater weight to other considerations than the body of the people can do) would seldom fail to discern and respect sound popular opinion, will, as a general rule, be found to promote most effectually the dignity and usefulness of the office.

Some writers on the subject have recorded their own pastoral experience as in favour of popular election. It is very probable that, in congregations trained and guided by good and able men, such as these writers were, the results of such a mode of election were on the whole favourable. But they are on that very ground deceptive, and the value of such testimony, when adduced with the view of recommending popular election as a general rule, is diminished by the very excellencies of those who give it. It is unwise to frame the machinery of government, whether in the Church or in the State, in a confident expectation of its being always wisely and skilfully handled. Laws—and church laws like others—must be such as shall be workable by average men in ordinary circumstances, if they are to work for good.

It does not appear to be generally known or remembered that the appointment of members of

session by co-optation instead of by popular election, if not the original and universal practice in the Church of Scotland from the earliest times, was formally sanctioned at a period when popular rights were certainly not kept out of sight by the Church, and which is often pointed to as that in which its Presbyterian polity was in the most vigorous and healthy exercise. The Act of the General Assembly of 1642 ordains "That the old session elect the new one, both in burgh and land; and if any place shall vaik, in the session chosen, by death or otherwise, that the present session have the election of the person to fill the vacant room."

Lastly, there is nothing in what has been said to condemn the laudable and useful custom in accordance with which a minister of the word and sacraments, not holding at the time a pastoral charge, is admitted as a member of the parochial council in the congregation in which he worships. His position is for the time similar to that of the lay members of the Church, and if his brethren of the laity consider that his counsels or aid may be of service either directly or as a delegate to the higher courts of the Church, there is no reason why they should not accept, or why he should not afford them.

A P P E N D I X.

A, p. 6.

THE use of the words *lay*, *laity*, *layman*, has been objected to. The objection might deserve consideration, if the use of these terms implied any sanction of *such* a distinction between the people and the clergy as was once held to exist. But where a distinction does exist, as certainly there does between those who are educated, consecrated, and maintained with a view to spiritual functions, and those for whose benefit they are educated, consecrated, and maintained, it is mere squeamishness to object to the use of terms for marking that distinction, merely because erroneous ideas have been sometimes connected with the distinction in question. The terms are applied in reference to ecclesiastical relations in the same sense, and in no other, as that in which they may be, and, in fact, frequently are, employed in reference to other relations. Thus we may, and sometimes do, speak of *lawyers* and *laymen*, meaning those who are, and those who are not, lawyers, &c. At all events, some equally convenient terms should be proposed by those who

object to the terms consecrated by use. Certainly, little is gained by such cumbrous and inconsistent circumlocutions as, “those whom some call laics;” “the members of the Church, as distinguished from the ministers of the word and sacraments,” &c.

Again, where the absurdity of the objection in question is admitted, another objection is made to the application of the term lay or laymen to the functionaries called elders in the Reformed Churches. It is maintained that, as invested with ecclesiastical office, they ought not to be classed with the laity. “But they certainly are,” as Hill observes, “laymen in this respect, that they have no right to teach or to dispense the sacraments.” A justice of the peace and a juryman, although exercising important functions in the administration of the law, occupy a different position in reference to it from that of barristers and solicitors. They are, as regards the law, *laymen*. In fact, the great value of the functionaries in question consists in their *laymanship*—their identification with the people, as distinct from the professional functionaries of the Church, in all respects, and in all the relations of life.

B, p. 7.

Τὸ τῆνικάδε αὐτοὺς εἰσάγουσιν, ἰδίᾳ μὲν ποιήσαντες τάγμα τῶν ἄρτι ἀρχομένων, καὶ εἰσαγομένων, καὶ οὐδέπω τὸ σύμβολον τοῦ ἀποκεκαθάρθαι ἀνεληφύτων· ἐτέρον δὲ τὸ τῶν κατὰ τὸ

δυνατὸν παραστησάντων ἑαυτῶν τὴν προαίρεσιν, οὐκ ἄλλο τι
 βούλεσθαι, ἢ τὰ Χριστιανοῖς δοκοῦντα· παρ' οἷς εἰσι τινες τε-
 ταγμένοι πρὸς τὸ φιλοπευστεῖν τοὺς βιούς καὶ τὰς ἀγωγὰς τῶν
 προσιώντων, ἵνα τοὺς μὲν τὰ ἐπιζῆτα πράττοντας ἀποκαλύσωσιν
 ἥκειν ἐπὶ τὸν κοινὸν αὐτῶν σύλλογον.

C, p. 23.

The idea of the constitution of the early Churches with which this view is connected, besides giving countenance to an erroneous theory of the office of the lay ruler, is fraught with other evils to the cause of the Reformed ecclesiastical polity, of which its supporters appear to be unconscious. After being repudiated by the standard writers on church government of the Reformed Churches, it has been caught up again by popular writers, who take but a partial and imperfect view of the field of controversy, under the impression of its being a good weapon of defence against the claims of High-Church Episcopacy.

Unable to deny the all but universal prevalence of Episcopacy very soon after the death of the Apostles, these writers—instead of endeavouring, like the great scholars who preceded them, to show that this Episcopacy was not prelatical, but presidential, connected and compatible with a substantially Presbyterian government, and, even if sanctioned, yet not prescribed by the Apostles—seek to turn to their own account the

fact which they cannot deny, by having recourse to the theory that the Episcopacy of the first two or three centuries was only a parochial Episcopacy, always limited to the oversight of a single congregation—an Episcopacy of which the bishop and the presbyters are exactly represented by a modern parish minister and session. Nay, they go so far as to tell us, when they have appointed deacons to take care of the poor, that they have “the three orders,” bishop, presbyter, and deacon!

This theory, which is set forth and contemplated with extraordinary satisfaction, not only by Miller, who views with great self-complacency his own picture of a primitive “Church,” presided over by a bishop and “a bench of ruling elders,” but by others, has no basis in Scripture or in history—being at variance with the ideas presented to us by both, under the terms Church, Bishop, and Presbyter—and if it had, so far from strengthening, as these writers are desirous of doing, would undermine the defences of the Reformed polity, and prove favourable only to a sort of congregational independency.

If what is claimed for each minister of a particular parish or congregation under this theory were merely that all “presbyters,” at the first formation of churches, and in the language of the New Testament, were “bishops,” and that he, being a presbyter, is, in the New Testament sense, a bishop, having jointly with his co-presbyters the corporate oversight of the city or district in which his parish or congregation lies, and a special delegated oversight of his own portion of that,

city or district, this is precisely the view taken by all sound writers, and is in fact denied by no one. But this is not what is meant. On the contrary, those who hold this theory refuse to those whom *they call* presbyters, with the exception of one in each congregation, the title of bishop. Their view is, that the modern parish minister and his session represent the bishop and presbyters of an age succeeding that of the Apostles, when the bishop had become distinct from the presbyters—that he is, in short, such a bishop as those of the second or third century, whose episcopate, although admitted by all to have been humble and territorially limited, as compared with that of later times, was certainly a different thing from the share of the joint episcopate held by each individual presbyter-bishop in the cities of Ephesus or Philippi at the first formation of the Churches there.

Now, if this supposed identity of the modern parish minister with the bishop of the second century be founded on the fact that the bishop presided over only a single church, that is indeed true; but then that church was not, in principle or idea, even if sometimes in fact, a single congregation. It comprehended invariably the whole body of professing Christians in a city, whether consisting of a few hundreds or of many thousands, without reference to the circumstance of their worshipping in one or in several buildings. On the theory under discussion, there are as many bishops and churches in a city as there are parish ministers and parishes. In ancient times, we never read of more

churches or more bishops than one in a city, as we must have done if the ancient "church" and the modern "congregation" were synonymous. Those who hold this view appear to forget that the defenders of the Reformed or Presbyterian view of church government are between two fires, and that there is danger lest, in rashly taking up a position to avoid the assaults of High-Church Episcopacy, they lay themselves open to those of Independency.

Again, if the alleged identity be founded on the fact, that the territorial bounds of the early bishop's jurisdiction were often designated by the term *παροικία*, from which our word *parish* is derived, this also is admitted; and it is further admitted that these bounds were much smaller than most medieval and modern dioceses. But the term *παροικία*, which means merely the neighbourhood or district around the bishop's residence with its inhabitants, is quite indefinite as to the extent of territory or number of people which it designates, and must not be interpreted by notions derived from the idea of a modern parish. No bishop's *παροικία* ever embraced less than the whole of the city in which he lived, with all its suburbs, environs, and Christian inhabitants; and as there were never two "churches" or bishops, so there were never two *παροικίαι* in the same city. It is only at a much later period that we begin to hear of the division of the bishop's *παροικία* or diocese into *tituli* or modern parishes, each receiving as its stated and formally instituted pastor one of the presbyters who had previously exercised a joint super-

vision over the whole city with his brethren of the presbyterial college, under the presidency or chief pastorate of the bishop.

We have never heard of its being questioned by any standard Reformed divine, that the presbyter-bishops of the Churches of the Apostolic age—such, for instance, as those whom the Apostle Paul addresses at Ephesus in Acts xx.—were ministers of the word, jointly governing and instructing the whole Church in their respective cities. After a century or so, we find these Churches each superintended by a body of officials styled presbyters, subordinated to a head, to whom the title bishop, previously common to all the members of the body, is now confined—although he is still sometimes, as Polycarp was by Irenæus, styled a presbyter. What were this bishop and presbyters? With one voice all Episcopalians and all Presbyterians, of whatever school or shade of opinion, have been accustomed to answer, A body of ministers of the word and ordinances, as before; although High-Church Episcopalians or Prelatists would differ from moderate Episcopalians and Presbyterians as to the source and extent of the special power and dignity of the bishop. But, according to the new theory we are considering, this body, which was, in the infancy of the Church and in the time of the Apostle, a college of ministers, or, in ordinary language, a presbytery, has dwindled down into a single minister and a session. This is certainly at variance with what we have been accustomed to read and believe of the rapid increase and development of the Church.

Where, we would ask, on this theory, is to be found the authority or precedent for Presbyterian church government beyond the sphere of the single congregation? The Reformed divines have hitherto been accustomed to find it in the fact that the first "Churches," embracing all the Christians of each city, were placed by the Apostles under the corporate charge of a body of presbyter-bishops, amongst whom, only after the lapse of some centuries, the cities and their environs were portioned out in distinct parishes. But, under the view we are discussing, we have no presbytery in the ordinary sense at all, except what Miller, begging the question, as he so often does, styles "the parochial presbytery," that is, the session. We have mere congregations, each presided over by a single minister, and having no organic or official connection with any other.

But the most striking point in this theory so strangely mooted by Presbyterians, and the one which most concerns our present work, is that which has been adverted to in the text—its bearing on the fundamental tenet of the Reformed or Presbyterian polity, the original and essential parity of all presbyters, and their equal title to the designation of bishops, in the New Testament sense of the term. No Presbyterians complain more loudly than the holders of this new theory, of the appropriation of the original title and powers of presbyters, and the assumption of lordly superiority over them, by prelates. But under their own theory a like distinction of grade is effected, if not by the elevation of one presbyter *above* his brethren, yet

by the depression of the presbyters *under* one of their number—the preaching presbyter, or, as they style him, bishop—until they cease to have any share in the ministry of the Gospel at all. The most lordly hierarch never thought of denying that every presbyter had in himself, and by virtue of his ordination, authority to minister the word and sacraments. This has been reserved for the Presbyterians whose views we are considering. They give the bishop a smaller diocese, it is true, but a more decided superiority over those whom they call presbyters. This is Prelacy with a witness, and one cannot but wonder at those who imagine that by this view of matters they are defending the Reformed or Presbyterian polity.

The theory which we are now discussing appears to have originated in an overstraining—under the influence of ideas derived from modern and familiar arrangements—and a misapplication of the views of such writers as Lord Chancellor King and his follower in this respect, Dr George Campbell of Aberdeen. These writers, with the design of moderating the claim of High-Church Prelacy in modern times to be regarded as the sole true representative of the primitive Church polity, contrast the small dioceses of the early bishops with the enormous ones of later ages, and give great, indeed undue, prominence to the fact that the primitive bishop, with his presbyters and flock, had often but one place of public assemblage. But, it need scarcely be observed, neither of these learned and able men give the slightest sanction to the notion that the body of presbyters who are found under each bishop were anything else than ministers of the word

and sacraments. So far from this, King expressly states them to have been clergymen; and Campbell, as we have shown elsewhere, entirely repudiates the existence, in the early Churches, of ruling, as distinct from teaching presbyters.

It is difficult but indispensable in the study of such questions, even where there is nothing deserving the name of undue bias or prejudice, to divest the mind of ideas and associations derived from a familiar state of things; and in nothing, as Vitringa complains, is it at once more difficult and more indispensable to do so than when we attempt to draw rules and principles of ecclesiastical polity from what is recorded of the early Churches. The tendency is almost irresistible, because unconscious, to regard facts and terms similar to those to which we have been accustomed, as involving the same principles and meaning. Let us endeavour to avoid this while taking a brief glance at the formation and constitution of these primitive communities.

The scenes of the labours of the Apostles appear from Scripture to have been the principal cities of the countries which they visited. In each of these we find them gathering the converts to Christianity into one society or brotherhood, and to each of these societies one name, that of "a Church," is invariably assigned. To this "Church" all the Christians of the locality, whether few or many, belonged, and appear to have, in fact, as Christians, been bound to belong; nor can any instance be produced of the institution by the Apostles, or of the existence for some centuries, of more than one

“Church” in a city. This is what might have been expected. The spirit of Christianity, as well as the necessity of the times, requiring union on the part of the followers of Christ, the Apostles, filled with wisdom by the Holy Spirit, took advantage of the civil and social bonds which connected, in a community of interest and feeling, those who were inhabitants of the same place and neighbourhood. Accordingly, whatever might be the number of believers in a city, whether a hundred or several thousands, they were always joined together in one association. Thus, while we find mention made of the “Churches” of a province, as “the Churches of Asia,” “the Churches of Galatia,” “of Macedonia,” “of Judea,” we read of the “Church,” never “Churches,” “at Jerusalem,” “at Antioch” “of Ephesus,” “in Smyrna,” “of the Thessalonians,” “of the Laodiceans.”

It is of the very highest importance in questions of church government that this fact be kept in remembrance, and that this strictly technical meaning of the term “Church” be carefully distinguished in the mind from the general sense of the word as applied to all the people of God, or the Church Universal, as well as from its use when applied, by synecdoche, to any portion, however small, of the visible Church, and from its application to a single congregation and the edifice in which it assembles. A very slight examination will convince any one that in the technical ecclesiastical sense in which the word so often occurs in the New Testament, it implies the organised Christianity of a city; and this organised Christianity, or community of

Christians of a city, we accordingly hold—because we invariably find it—to have been the fundamental or radical Christian Society. All organisations, more and less extensive, superior and subordinate, were alike matters of after arrangement.

In this view all sound Episcopalians and Presbyterians are perfectly agreed. To both equally stands opposed the modern Independent or Congregational principle that “a Church,” in the Apostolic sense, comprehends only those professing Christians who voluntarily associate themselves together, and worship in the same place or edifice. A theory which makes Christian organisation to depend on a matter so mechanical, fluctuating, and accidental as the capacity of a building, and which, ceasing to unite beyond the will of the individuals, and the walls within which they worship, disunites by rule those whom civil relations and a common Christianity have united, certainly appears at variance with the principles and practice of the Apostles. In order to establish it, it would be necessary to show with the utmost clearness that each “Church” mentioned in the New Testament was a single congregation, meeting in the same place. But while the circumstances of the early Christians, which rendered it difficult or impossible for them to assemble statedly in crowds, are viewed in connection with the great numbers of converts in some “Churches,” it will not be readily admitted that such could have been the case; and the astonishment excited by the attempts of good and able men to prove it, can be equalled only by that which is caused by their

believing it themselves. And yet still more might be fairly asked for. It might be demanded that those who hold this theory should produce one instance, at least, of more than one organised "Church" in the same city. It is readily admitted that in some cases all the Christians of a city might assemble together for worship; that in most cases this must have been not only possible, but the fact, for some time; and that in many cities, although too numerous to do so, they may, through poverty, or through unwillingness unnecessarily to attract notice, have had but one public place of assemblage for the more solemn offices of religion. But the fundamental fallacy of Congregationalism is, that because this may have been the case in some places it must have been the case in all; that it originated in design, not in circumstances; that separate places of assemblage implied independent organisation and government; that the necessities of the Church while struggling for existence in its infant state are to form an invariable rule for all ages. Surely a theory which thus limits combination, the very principle and aim of Christianity, which magnifies self-will and separation, and which would present to us the Church of a city, not in the condition of a united family, but as a set of unconnected clubs, might at least be presumed not to receive any countenance from Scripture.

The question is not introduced here with a view to its being fully discussed, but with a view to the observation that Presbyterian writers have, in more than one instance, unthinkingly favoured the Congregational

theory, which represents the rudimental Christian society or ecclesiastical association as being in principle, because sometimes perhaps in fact, a single congregation. This they have been led to do, as we have seen, when pressed by the exigencies of controversy with Episcopalians, in a manner which has greatly perplexed and discredited the arguments in favour of the principles of Presbytery, and which, were it as warrantable as it is clearly devoid of warrant, would, instead of strengthening the cause sought to be maintained, sap its very foundation.

The Christians of each city, thus formed into one Church, were uniformly, so far as we read, placed by the Apostles under the tuition and government of a body of officials styled, in accordance with Jewish usage, *presbyters* or elders, and in accordance with Gentile usage, as well as from their function of oversight, *bishops* or overseers; and it is evident, from the terms employed, that in each case this body and all its members bore a general relation to all the Christians of the church or city. Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiv. 23) ordained elders in every Church, *κατ' ἐκκλησίαν*; Titus is commissioned in Crete to ordain elders in every city, *κατὰ πόλιν*. The associated presbyter-bishops were thus the spiritual guides and rulers at once of the "city" and of its "Church."

When we have mentioned these two facts, the organisation of the Christian converts of each city into one society for the purposes of worship, instruction, and discipline, and the establishment over each such society

of a college of presbyter-bishops, along with the additional fact that the laity or "brethren" had a voice (although the manner in which they exercised it is not defined or recorded) in the government of the society, we believe we have stated the only formal points of Church polity for which such decisive authority as is implied in the uniform practice of the Apostles can be alleged. We find certain societies uniformly founded, and a plurality of spiritual rulers placed over each. Beyond this, no rule, no record even of what was done, is afforded us. That each society must from the first have had some by-laws or usages by which the proceedings, functions, and relations of its officials and members were regulated—must, in short, have had a constitution—is certain; but whether this constitution was in every or in any instance left in whole, as it must have been in part, to the choice of the society itself, or was settled by the Apostles and their coadjutors, and whether, supposing the latter to have been the case, the constitution was the same in all churches indiscriminately, are matters respecting which we have no information. Thus, as regards the official relations of the presbyter-bishops among themselves, the amount of power given in each Church to the presiding member of the collegiate body, and the duration of his presidency, and as regards the extent to which the authority of the presbyter-bishops was limited by a more or less direct expression of the popular voice, there are neither any rules laid down, nor anything to enable us positively to determine what was the practice in any one Church,

still less whether the practice was uniform, and least of all whether it was intended to be so.

Thus, too, when, as must very soon, if not from the first, have been the case, the number of converts in a city so far exceeded the capacity of a single edifice as to require separate places of worship, it is impossible for us to determine what was or what ought to have been the relation, the apportionment of governmental power, between the original collective "Church" and its offshoots. It is not, indeed, until after the lapse of several generations, that we find the original society, the "Church of the city," portioned out into definite *tituli* or parishes, each with a member of the primitive clerical college or presbytery specially and exclusively attached to it as its sole, proper, and permanent pastor. Yet from the first there must have been, as we have seen, in many cities and their suburbs, separate assemblages, the germs of future parishes, clustered around the mother congregation, forming in theory a part of it, and ministered to probably by the various members of the presbytery in turn. But as to what was done, or what ought to have been done, in the process of this development, we have nothing to enable us to speak, or on which to found authoritative rules for our guidance in modern times.

Nothing can be more foolish or vain than the attempt to find, as some appear to expect, in the organisation of the early Church, in these circumstances, a precise counterpart or exemplification of either a modern presbytery or a modern parochial session; and surely,

on the other hand, it is most prejudicial to all useful historical inquiry to carry back to the interpretation of the early records of the Church, ideas borrowed from modern arrangements. One disputant finds in the organisation of a primitive "Church" a community under a presbytery, another a congregation under a pastor and session. Now neither of these views is correct. The original Church association was neither, or, to speak more accurately, it was both. In so far as it comprehended all the Christians of the city, whatever their number, and was governed and ministered to in every case by a plurality of ministers of the word and sacraments, it embodied the idea of the presbytery, which is accordingly with justice regarded by all sound writers of the Reformed Church, as it was by the Westminster Assembly,* as the original, radical unit of organisation and government. But on the other hand, in so far as it was at the same time the lowest existing organisation, comprehending sometimes only a single congregation, and being, when containing more than one in fact, still only one in theory, as well as the immediate sphere of personal discipline over the members, and not, like the modern presbytery, a court of reference or appeal, it possessed the characteristics of the modern parish or congregation under its session.

There is no record of a formal distinction or separation between the superior, collective, or urban organisation on the one hand, and the subordinate, parochial, or congregational, on the other, having taken place in

* See 'Form of Church Government.'

any Church during the time of the Apostles. When, therefore, as was the inevitable result of the increase of the Churches, it did take place, the only rule by which the apportionment of powers and functions between the superior and the subordinate bodies could possibly be determined, must have been expediency, or the application of good sense and Christian principle to the circumstances of each case.

D, pp. 41, 42.

“Secundum sit, veterem omnem Ecclesiam presbyterorum vocabulo non alios quam pastores intellexisse, in verbo ac sacramentis occupatos. Non ago de voce *senum* aut *seniorum*, quâ certum est interdum ætatem, nonnunquam et magistratum, significari; sed de voce Græcâ, quæ in Latino sermone dignitatem ac munus pastorale semper significat; idemque de Græcis auctoribus dictum volumus, ubicunque *πρεσβυτέρου* vox aliud quam ætatem aut magistratum notat. De loco Paulino nondum agimus, qui ad Juris Divini quæstionem magis pertinet. De Veteris quoque Testamenti *senioribus* erit infra agendi locus. Ex tanto patrum numero, tot librorum voluminibus, tamdiu tractatâ hâc controversiâ, ne unus quidem locus adferri potuit, in quo presbyteralis dignitas aliis quam pastoribus tribueretur; cum tamen, si duplex fuisset presbyterorum genus, non sæpe, sed centies, imo millies, eorum fieri mentio debuisset;

præsertim in canonibus, qui totum Ecclesiæ regimen nobis depingunt, saltem modus eligendi istos non-pastores presbyteros alicubi appareret. Etsi autem neganti non incumbit probatio, facile tamen est infinitos Patrum locos producere, qui presbyteris omnibus tribuunt jus pascendi gregem, baptizandi, et corpus Domini exhibendi, atque eatenus omnes presbyteros Episcopis adæquant, et apostolorum vocant successores; qui pœnam ostendunt fuisse presbyterorum presbyterio dimoveri, aut ad tempus ad solam laicorum communionem admitti; qui sportulas singulis ostendunt datas, disciplinam præscriptam multo quam ceteris severiorem. Extant et leges de presbyterorum immunitate a foro atque oneribus, multaque alia quæ presbyteros vetant ullos extra pastores agnosci.”—Grotius, *De Imperio Summarum Potestatum circa Sacra*, xi. 14.

“Venio ad presbyterorum vocem, quam multi assessoribus pastorum tributam volunt in Novo Testamento, de quo mihi non liquet. . . . In omni Novo Fœdere una duntaxat Pauli sententia est quæ ad constituendos presbyteros non-pastores speciose affertur. *Οἱ καλῶς προσεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι διπλῆς τιμῆς ἀξιούσθωσαν, μάλιστα οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ.* Ex hâc voculâ *μάλιστα* infertur aliquos eo tempore fuisse presbyteros tantum *προσεστῶτας*, et non *κοπιῶντας ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ.* Sed primum, id si verum esset, saltem aliunde appareret novum hoc presbyterorum genus, alibi nunquam memoratum, quo auctore, quâ occasione cœpisset, sicut diaconorum origo narrata est; et non ita obiter atque in transcurso, uno in loco, ubi de munerum ecclesiasticorum

generibus sermo institutus non est, insinuetur pars necessaria ecclesiastici regiminis. Deinde Patres proximi apostolorum temporibus monuissent nos hujus rei; saltem Græci, quibus sua lingua ignota esse non poterat, hanc nobis reliquissent interpretationem, quam ex solâ verborum serie sequi sunt qui autumant. Nunc, cum ante hoc sæculum interpretum nemo verba Pauli ita acceperit, merito videndum est, an non aliam interpretationem ferant, quæ nihil a cæteris Scripturæ locis diversum asserat.

“Videamus ergo, quid sit propositum Paulo. *Honorem duplicem* vult presbyteris exhiberi. Quis sit honor de quo agitur, ex superioribus potest intelligi; *ζῆλος τιμᾶς*; ubi *τὸ τιμᾶν*, *honorare*, nihil est aliud quam *honeste sustentare*. Vult enim eas viduas honorari, quæ vere sunt viduæ, hoc est, ut ex oppositione apparet, eas quæ fideles cognatos aut affines non habent, quorum ope possint sustentari. Nam si habeant, has vetat Ecclesiæ esse oneri. Absoluto de viduis sustentandis sermone, docet etiam presbyteris suppeditandum, unde honeste vivant. Hoc voce *τιμῆς* indicari ratio subnexa ostendit: *Scriptum est enim, bovi trituranti os non obligabis*. Hoc ipsum Scripturæ testimonium alibi quoque in eundem sensum produxerat. *Quis suis stipendiis militat? Quis vineam plantat, et de proventu non edit? Quis gregem pascit et gregis lacte non vescitur? An secundum hominem hoc tantum dico? Annon et lex idem docet? In lege enim Scriptum est non obligabis os bovi trituranti*. Et postea: *Si spiritualia serimus, an magnum est si carnalia metimur?* Recte ergo ad illum, de quo agimus,

Chrysostomus, Hieronymus, Ambrosius, etiam Calvinus et Bullingerus notant de suppeditando victu et rerum necessariorum subsidio Apostolum hic agere. Assessores eos, de quibus nobis sermo est, stipendiis ecclesiasticis sustentari neque hodie videmus, neque visum est unquam. Neque vero credibile est Apostolum, qui ubique parcit Ecclesiis, quippe satis pauperibus, gravatas illas voluisse onere non necessario. Quare, si usquam, hoc imprimis loco illorum assessorum intempestiva fuisset mentio, ubi de stipendiis oratio instituta est.

“ Verborum Pauli multas interpretationes non incommodas alii attulerunt. Simplicissima hæc est. Omnibus quidem presbyteris stipendia deberi, ut qui præsint Ecclesiæ, hoc est, gregem Dominicum pascant; sed illis præcipue, qui omni curâ rei familiaris neglectâ, uni studio Evangelii propagandi incumbunt, nullique labori parcant. Non ergo duo ponuntur presbyterorum genera, sed monstratur non parem esse omnium laborem. Agnoscunt omnes, etiam Beza, verbo κοπιᾶν non quemvis laborem, sed eum, qui cum insigni molestiâ conjunctus sit, designari. Itaque Paulus se ait Evangelio operam dedisse, non vulgarem, sed ἐν κόποις; quibus explicandis addit μόχθον, λίσμον, δίψιν, ἀγρυπνίας, et omnia incommodorum genera. Christus in Epistolâ ad Ephesinum Episcopum cum dixisset, *novi opera tua*, addit, ut majus aliquid, et τὸν κόπον. Paulus etiam verbum κοπιᾶζειν sæpe sibi tribuit, deinde etiam sanctis quibusdam mulieribus, quæ huc illuc, relictis rebus suis, Evangelii causâ discursabant. His ergo presbyteris, qui nihil aliud curant præter Evangelium, ejusque rei causâ omnibus incommodis

se exponunt, plus aliquanto quam ceteris deberi ratio dictat. Sic et Paulus τὸ προϊστασθαι et τὸ κοπιᾶν de iisdem extulit ad Thessalonicenses; ἐξωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν Κυρίῳ, καὶ νοθεύοντας ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἡγείσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπὲρ ἐκπερισοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν. Omnis ergo error novorum interpretum in eo est, quod putent illud ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ pronuntiandum ἐμφατικῶς, cum emphasis sit in voce κοπιῶντας; illâ autem ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ additâ duntaxat explicandæ voci κοπιᾶν.—*Ibid.*, xi. 16.

The learned author then proceeds to establish the lawfulness, on grounds of Scripture and antiquity, and the expediency, of the institution of lay assessors in the government of the Church.

E, p. 46.

“Nempe sic autumo, quod ex testimoniis supra notatis, non tantum bonâ fide concludatur, in Ecclesiâ primâ nullos fuisse episcopos, presbyteris gradu superiores, sed et nullos in eâdem Ecclesiâ notos fuisse presbyteros, ab aliis sui ordinis viros distinctos munere. Animadvertimus utique, Ecclesias nostræ patriæ gubernari a presbyteris duplicis generis, docentibus, sic dictis, et regentibus. Per docentes intelligimus ministros evangelii, quibus cura præconii verbi divini et sacramentorum administrandorum cum maxime committitur, per regentes spectatæ dignitatis viros, de corpore Ecclesiæ elec-

tos, qui ministris Evangelii adjunguntur, ut de consiliis sacris in commodum Ecclesiæ capiendis iiscum in omnibus negotiis participent. Hi tamen presbyteri regentes notabiliter, satis variisque partibus, a docentibus sunt distincti. Neque enim ipsis est potestas docendi aut administrandi sacramenta. Nec sustentantur ab Ecclesiâ. Nec præsunt Ecclesiæ in perpetuum, sed, ubi per tempus aliquod certe definitum huic muneri vacarunt, aliis locum faciunt successoribus. Hæc, inquam, presbyterorum regentium apud nos est conditio, a docentibus sic satis distinctorum ordine et munere. Hujusmodi vero presbyteros ego quidem nullos fuisse existimem in Ecclesiâ vetere apostolicâ.”—Vitringa, *De Synagogâ Vetere*, ii. 2, 482.

“Certum est et indubitatum, presbyteri vocem in Scriptis Apostolorum unum idemque valere, ac eam pastorum et episcoporum. Omnium presbyterorum fuit ποιμαίνειν et ἐπισκοπεῖν. Paulo apostolo perinde est sive episcopi sive presbyteri describat requisita; sive presbyteros sive episcopos in Ecclesiâ ordinatos dicat (1 Tim. iii. 1; Tit. i. 5; Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. v. 1). Aliàs etiam, ut notum est, presbyterorum constans officium simplici nomine pascendi exprimitur, absque ullâ variatione, vel aliâ atque aliâ hujus vocabuli interpretatione; pascere enim est docere, monere, sacramenta administrare, et omni potestate spirituali, a Christo ministris suis concessâ, gregem gubernare. Nulla distinctio significationis hujus vocis, latioris videlicet et strictioris, nota est in scriptis apostolicis, ubi illa applicatur pres-

byteris. Episcopi, inquam, presbyteri, et pastores, juxta stylum S. Scripturæ, cui nos in hac disceptatione oportet esse intentos, sunt nomina designantia unum eundemque ordinem hominum, nec ordine et genere, nec officio, distinctorum. Hæc positio stabit, opinor, quamdiu erunt, qui absque *πρόληψι* legent Acta Apostolorum, eorundemque epistolas. Quæ si stat, tum cadunt presbyteri laici. An enim serio asseverare et defendere audemus, his presbyteris laicis convenire nomen episcoporum, convenire nomen pastorum? Si non audemus, utique actum est de illis, quoniam alii presbyteri ab apostolis in Ecclesiâ non sunt agniti et constituti præter eos, qui simul pastores sunt et episcopi.

Observemus (etsi adeo cognitum est ut observationis nomen non mereatur) Paulum in epistolâ ad Timotheum recensiturum officia administranda in quâque Ecclesiâ sui temporis, episcopos tantum et diaconos memorare. Calvinus agnoscit tres ordines ministrorum Ecclesiæ; Paulus duos tantum. Hic presbyteros laicos cui ordini accensebis? Episcoporum? Sed vix autem quempiam, qui intelligit vim vocis *ἐπίσκοπος* apud Paulum, et qui nostros presbyteros laicos noverit, homines sane vix ullo alio consilio in Ecclesiam introductos et vix ullo alio fungentes munere, (si modo et huic pares essent, ut sæpe non sunt), quam uti moderentur potestatem ministrorum verbi divini, eos serio ausurum vocare episcopos. Et tamen qui hanc hypothesin tenet, eum vel hos laicos presbyteros adsciscere oportet ordini episcoporum, vel statuere, Paulum apostolum eos in

recensendis officiis Ecclesiæ, quod hic curate et ex consilio instituit, præterisse. Id vero, quam sit durum dictu, quisque etiam, me tacente, facile intelligit.”—*Ibid.*, 484.

“Verum non aliunde evidentius mihi opinio de presbyteris laicis confutari posse videtur, quam ex historiâ regiminis Ecclesiæ Christianæ, quæ excepit tempora apostolorum. Ecclesiæ, post tempora apostolorum, (quantum de iis ex antiquis monumentis judicare licet), quos habuerunt presbyteros? Quo modo, quâ formâ, rectæ sunt? Scilicet nihil certius, nihil in omni historiâ vetere exploratius, quam Presbyteros, ab Episcopo, sic dicto, distinctos, constituisse partem spectatissimam cleri; instar episcopi, sive, si placet, instar Ministrorum Verbi Divini nostri temporis consideratos fuisse, ceu totos consecratos curandæ Ecclesiæ; in clerum, hoc est, in ordinem personarum sacrarum non fuisse assumptos, nisi hoc consilio ut in eo perseverarent per totam vitam, aliis omnibus curis et officiis et dignitatibus mundanis renunciantes; habuisse facultatem docendi in Ecclesiâ, aliisque locis publicis privatisque, (singulare enim id et privum habitum si hæc facultas presbytero negata sit); habuisse item facultatem administrandi sacramenta; baptizatos in frontibus, absente episcopo, chrismate inungendi; cœnæ dominicæ præsidendi, ejusque distribuendi symbola; benedictiones et preces, ut usus in ejusmodi casu ferebat, recitandi; inde consideratos esse ut sacerdotes, ejusdem scilicet ordinis viros cum episcopo, qui et ipse sacerdos erat; vixisse ex sacris haud minus

ac episcopum. Imo vero, quid facit, exceptâ ordinatione episcopus, quod presbyter non faciat? ait Hieronymus.—*Ibid.*, 486.

“An dicendum, quod, cum apostoli presbyteros laicos instituerint, quibus curam regendæ Ecclesiæ qualemcunque demandaverunt, et quibus tamen non concesserunt evangelium prædicare et sacramenta administrare, quod, inquam, cum apostoli ejusmodi presbyteros laicos suo tempore instituerint, universa Ecclesia mox ab hoc apostolorum instituto et a praxi Ecclesiæ primi temporis recesserit, et eorum loco alios quosdam presbyteros ordinârit, ab iis apostolorum diversissimos, et tales fere quales nos modo depinximus? Certe id creditu multo adhuc difficilius. Quid enim movisset non unam, sed omnes Ecclesias ab hoc instituto Ecclesiarum apostolicarum, in quo nihil παράδοξον aut ἄτοπον erat, tam cito recedere? Nec valet exceptio, rem simili modo se habuisse cum episcopis, sic signate dictis, quippe qui ex nostrâ sententiâ in apostolicis Ecclesiis nulli fuerunt, et tamen brevi post in omnibus fere Ecclesiis agniti sunt, a presbyteris distincti. Etenim notandum, 1. Non unum sed varios in apostolicis scriptis extare disertos textus, ex quibus liqueat, apostolorum ævum non agnovisse episcopos, a presbyteris distinctos; quando tamen in sequenti Ecclesiâ, post medium fere sæculum elapsum, offendimus episcopos a presbyteris distinctos, nulla nobis alia superest ratio hanc illius consuetudinem conciliandi cum textibus, qui nobis exhibent constitutionem Ecclesiæ apostolicæ, quam ut dicamus, epis-

copos post decessum apostolorum, sive humano consilio, sive etiam, cum præsides essent senatus presbyterorum, continuato usu et exercitio hujus dignitatis, in Ecclesiâ, sensim quidem et sine sensu, at aiunt, esse natos. Si ἡ ἰσότης presbyterorum Ecclesiæ Christianæ primævæ tam clare et diserte adstrui non posset ex primis et indubitatis monumentis historiæ Ecclesiasticæ, actibus nimirum et Epistolis apostolicis, omnino desisteremus ab illâ hypothesi; sed cum illa contrarium suadeant, videndum nobis fuit, ut mediam quandam sententiam conciperemus, per quam tam ipsa illa primævæ monumenta Ecclesiæ, quam usus Ecclesiæ sequentis inter se concilientur. Sed cum presbyteri illi laici non magis in apostolicis scriptis quam in Ecclesiis sequentium temporum reperiantur, clarum est, hanc exceptionem per se cadere. 2. Probe observandum, duo hæc, quæ inter se comparantur, valde tamen a se invicem discrepare. Nimirum, id ex hypothesibus nostris non difficulter percipitur, quibus modis *episcopi*, sic dicti, etiamsi in Ecclesiis apostolicis nulli apparuerint, brevis etiam intervallo temporis, in Ecclesiis nasci potuerint; verum id non percipitur facile, quibus modis factum sit, ut *presbyteri laici*, si illos ab apostolis institutos esse supponamus, tam immanem subierint mutationem in Ecclesiâ, ut post breve tempus lapsum alii prorsus evaserint homines, quam non ita fuerant pridem. Quod enim ad *prius* illud ratio et experientia postulant ut credamus, senatus illos presbyterorum Ecclesiæ primævæ suos habuisse *præsides*, licet ejusdem muneris et nominis viros. Quî enim senatus cogi, quæstiones et dubia

in deliberationem mitti, vota rogari, collectiones formari, sententiæ exequutioni dari queant absque *præsidente*? Porro, simplicitas, pietas, et prudentia illius ævi simul suadent credere, presbyteros ejusmodi potissimum suum elegisse præsidem synedrii, qui vel ætate, vel doctrinâ et dotibus, vel dignitate civili (quâ nimirum ante professionem Christianam splenduerat) inter ceteros excellebat. Hujus autem *præsidis* cum continuatum munus fuerit per totam vitam suam, quis miretur, illius auctoritatem dignitatemque supra ceteros brevi magna cepisse incrementa, donec tandem *ordine* ceteris presbyteris superior haberi cœperit? Monstrent jam nobis, qui adversam tuentur sententiam, *presbyteros laicos* adeo facile potuisse μεταμορφοῦσθαι in *presbyteros clericos*, ac nos monstravimus, *episcopos* a *presbyteris* distinctos, oriri potuisse in ecclesiâ, et admittemus exceptionem, superius ad ipsam productam.

Non indigueramus tot verbis in hâc responsione, si Hieronymi accepissemus assertum, episcopos singulari consilio, vitandi schismatis causâ, in Ecclesiam—Alexandrinam quidem jam a temporibus Marci Evangelistæ—fuisse introductos. Sed placuit nobis in hâc disputatione esse liberalibus, ut morosis quoque lectoribus satisfaceremus. Liceat nunc ex dictis hanc instituere σύλλεξις. Si nullæ Ecclesiæ, quæ apostolicas ἀμείωως exceperunt, ejusmodi agnoverint presbyteros de plebe, quales in nostris Ecclesiis honorantur, perquam probabile est, Ecclesias apostolicas tales de plebe presbyteros non agnovisse; imo, si Presbyteri, quos vetus Ecclesia hoc nomine venerata est, a presbyteris laicis

nostrorum temporum tam munere quam dignitate et aliis notis multis fuerunt distinctissimi, et multo similiores ministris Verbi Divini hujus temporis, quam presbyteris de plebe, censemus modeste, presbyteros ejusmodi laicos Ecclesiæ primævæ abjudicandos esse.”—*Ibid.*, 487.

“Pro contrariâ opinione nihil tritius et vulgatus proferri solet, quam Pauli verba in Epistolâ ad Timotheum priore; cap. v. 17. Hic putant duplicis generis presbyteros satis distincte innui; quosdam, quibus commissa quidem Ecclesiæ cura, sed tamen Verbi Divini prædicandi munus commissum non erat; quosdam vero alios, quibus hoc docendi officium præter illud regendi speciatim demandatum sit, et qui propterea duplici honore digni censentur. Neque caret hæc ratiocinatio omni specie, si lector, præjudiciis consuetudinis hodierni temporis occupatus, locum fugienti tantum oculo transeat. Sed neque nos negamus Paulum quosdam presbyteros hic laudare ut docentes, alios vero ut non docentes; vel etiam, usum veteris Ecclesiæ sic tulisse ut quidam magis ac alii docuerint; negamus tamen, ut qui maxime, tale ab eo innui presbyterorum docentium et non docentium discrimen, quale nostræ habent Ecclesiæ. Sunt, ait Scultetus, qui vel unum hunc locum sat roboris habere putant ad firmandum presbyterium laicorum. Perstrinxit enim oculos et judicium illorum distinctio presbyterorum, non obscure per D. Paulum hic indicata. Qui si hunc ipsum locum paulo diligentius fuerint ruminati, eundemque cum aliis Scripturæ

dictis contulerint, deprehendent illico, presbyterorum laicorum ex hoc dicto defensionem contrariam esse significationi vocabuli $\pi\rho\omicron\sigma\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}\tau\epsilon\varsigma$, contrariam esse significationi nominis $\pi\rho\epsilon\sigma\beta\acute{\upsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$, adversari perpetuæ doctrinæ Pauli, adversari menti omnium patrum, a quibus quidem hoc Pauli effatum fuit expositum. Rem eo, quo proposuerat, ordine mascule exequitur doctissimus Scultetus, planissimam quidem viam nobis faciens, sed simul copiosioris dissertationis materiam præripiens.”—*Ibid.*, 490.

Vitringa then proceeds, with the commentary of Scultetus before him, to discuss the text. The work of Scultetus itself is most easily accessible in vol. vii. of the ‘*Critici Sacri*.’

“Ego vero,” says Vitringa, further down, “facile largior, Paulum quosdam pastorum Ecclesiæ hic considerare ut docentes, alios ut non docentes. Nego tamen Paulo ita scribenti tale obversatum esse discrimen presbyterorum docentium et non docentium quale nostræ agnoscunt et observant Ecclesiæ. Dicam igitur quis sit genuinus sensus verborum Pauli.

“Apostoli cuique Ecclesiæ suos ordinârunt vel ordinari jusserunt rectores, quos vocare licet pastores, episcopos, et presbyteros; omnibus eandem tribuerunt potestatem docendi, evangelizandi, sacramenta administrandi, et diligenter curandi ne respublica populi Christiani quid caperet detrimenti. Hoc opus Scriptura S. vocat $\pi\omicron\iota\mu\alpha\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\iota\mu$, pascere. Porro, etsi Apostoli vel Ecclesia etiam in

eligendis ejusmodi pastoribus ad id in ceteris vel maxime attenderint, an essent *διδασκατικοί*, ad docendum idonei, ceu Paulus in hac ipsâ suadet epistolâ, verisimile tamen est, in illis Christianæ Ecclesiæ rudimentis omnes pari instructos non fuisse aptitudine ad sermones habendos in cœtu fratrum, et de mysteriis Regni Cœlorum dextre disserendum. Quin omnino crediderim, non raro factum, ut in eundem presbyterorum ordinem, ex aliorum inopiâ, cooptati sint homines, severitate morum, experientiâ, et pietate vitæ valde venerabiles, ac proinde cœtui regendo summo quidem jure præfecti, sed ad docendum minus idonei, sive quod in eodem cœtu alios habuerint, se exercitiores, et ad docendum dicendumque copiosius instructos, cum ipsi interea temporis aliam aliquam partem muneris presbyteri diligenter curarent. Non abnegat itaque Paulus in hoc loco ullis presbyteris docendi jus; solummodo supponit, quosdam non docere. Vellet tamen ut omnes docerent; immo vero incitat et exhortatur omnes ut doceant, quoniam eos, qui docent, maxime prædicat dignos duplici honore. Hic simplex, hic clarus et minime ambiguus sensus est verborum Pauli. Qui itaque ex his verbis Pauli concludit, accidisse, ut presbyteri aliqui in Ecclesiis quibusdam non docuerint, nihil quidem inde arguit, quod nostræ hypothesei adversatur; at qui pedem ulterius promovet, et inde colligere laborat, extitisse in veteri Ecclesiâ presbyteros quibus nullum fuit jus docendi, oleum et operam perdit, quia id in verbis Pauli neuti-quam jacet, et doctrinæ Pauli de requisitis presbyterorum adversissimum est. Hæc, quæ sic diximus ad exposi-

tionem loci Paulini, tum lucem accipiunt ex monumentis antiquæ Ecclesiæ, tum etiam a doctis viris passim confirmantur.”—*Ibid.*, 493.

That the opinion expressed in these extracts had been deliberately formed and long held by the learned author, is shown by the following passage from his ‘Archisynagogus,’ published ten years previously:—

“Falluntur, si ego plurimum non fallor, qui hoc ex loco (1 Tim. v. 17) presbyteros eruunt docentes et non docentes, ea quæ hodie in Ecclesiis nostris apparent sibi persuadentes in veteri quoque locum habuisse; et facit ita existimantium turba, ut quondam et ego in eam opinionem concesserim, et ut dicam, sicuti res est, graviter cum ceteris erraverim. Tantum abest ut in primâ illâ Ecclesiâ id fuisset discrimen, ut ne quidem in sequenti fuerit, quando ἐπισκόπων et presbyterorum cœpit esse discrimen.”—*Archisynag.*, xiv. 317.

F, p. 56.

“I freely pass,” says Jameson (‘Cyprianus Isotimus,’ VI. § xviii.), “from some words of Tertullian and Origen, which I elsewhere (‘Nazianzeni Querela,’ part ii. sect. 4) overly mentioned, as containing them,” *i.e.*, as con-

taining proof of the existence of a class of ruling presbyters; "as also from what I said of the Ignatian presbyters, their being ruling or non-preaching elders." . . . "Notwithstanding these my recessions, I am persuaded that there were lay seniors that shared in the management of ecclesiastical affairs, represented the people, and preserved their liberties; and so much, I trust, I have already evinced. 'Tis, moreover, clear from hence—that the writers of the fourth and fifth ages either expressly affirm it, or clearly suppose it."

While enumerating the notices in these writers of the existence of such seniors, he thus adverts and replies to an inquiry of his antagonist, J. S. "We have (saith J. S.) Optatus more than once reckoning up all the orders of the Church, but always so as that you shall not find a ruling elder among them. Thus (lib. i.) he distributes all Christians into five ranks:—1. The Laicks; 2. The Ministri, or under-officers—sub-deacons, acolyths, doorkeepers, &c.; 3. The Deacons; 4. The Presbyters; 5. The Bishops. Now (adds J. S.) let G. R. try his skill, and tells us to which of these five ranks he can reduce his ruling elders."

"I freely answer," Jameson replies, "to that of the laicks. But to this answer he (J. S.) opposes Optatus's words, that the laicks were underprop'd by no ecclesiastical dignity—that is, that they didn't properly belong to the clergy. But this is so far from hurting me, that it is part of the very hypothesis I assert. But then (J. S. further says) they are inferior to deacons. But I am of the mind that inferiority or superiority has scarce any

place in the affair. We need not compare the deacons with the seniors, but only with bishops, presbyters, and other ranks of the scale to which they belong. But I'll suppose that superiority and inferiority may be here admitted ; yet can any think that these seniors were not, in respect of the interest they had in church affairs, before the church doorkeepers and gravediggers ?”

G, p. 66.

In an article (signed W. L.) in ‘The Church of Scotland Home and Foreign Missionary Record’ for June 1864, on the difficulty experienced in some districts of the country in obtaining a sufficient number of members of session, we find the following corroboration of the views we have expressed :—

“It is sometimes imagined that an elder is, by our laws, expected and bound to share with the minister all his ministerial labours, except those of conducting divine service in church during canonical hours, and administering the sacraments. It is imagined especially that every one who accepts the eldership is, by the laws of the Church, laid under a solemn obligation to administer religious instruction and consolation in private to the parishioners, as a part of the ordinary duties of his office. I believe this to be a view of the position of elders which is not only incorrect, but in many ways

mischievous. In particular, there is no doubt that its prevalence is one of the causes of the great difficulty which is found in most parishes in obtaining the consent of suitable persons to fill the office of the eldership—a difficulty so great as to be often insurmountable: the consequence being that, at this day, as I understand, a very large number of country parishes are not only inadequately provided with elders, but are even without any kirk-session. Of course there can be no doubt that it is the duty, not of elders only, but of every private Christian, if he has the time and the gifts, to visit the sick and the afflicted, to pray with the dying or the mourners, and to ‘do good as he has opportunity’—spiritual good no less than temporal good—‘to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith.’ This is the duty of all Christians who have the gifts and who have the opportunity, elders not certainly excepted—nay, from their position, elders perhaps more than other men. Let it not be supposed that ministers, at least, are jealous of the assistance of their elders, or of any of their people, or of any Christian men or women, with competent knowledge and prudence, who may be disposed to co-operate with them in the private duties of the ministerial office, or are otherwise than rejoiced to have such helpers in the Gospel. What almost every minister would reply to such an insinuation, is that which Moses said, when told by Joshua that Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, ‘Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon

them !” But this, I need hardly say, is not the question. And if I am asked, whether an elder, as an elder, is bound by his ordination to share in all the private ministerial duties of the pastor of the flock, and whether, by the laws of the Church, no man should be an elder who is not prepared to devote himself to the visitation of the flock ministerially ; the answer I must return is, that while not relieved from duties he owes to others as a Christian, and expected to be an example to the Church in all Christian duties, the peculiar and distinctive office of an elder is that of ruling in the Church, or assisting in the oversight, discipline, and government of the Church in its kirk-sessions, presbyteries, and General Assemblies. These are, I believe, important duties, which it is impossible for ministers to discharge rightly alone, and duties in the performance of which it is of the greatest consequence that they should be aided by prudent and judicious members of the Church. And these appear to be *the* duties which, by the constitution of the Church, are distinctively laid upon the ruling elders.”

It is impossible not to admit the good sense of these observations ; but while the judicious author has perceived a great source of unwillingness to accept the office of the lay eldership, in the ideas entertained in some quarters of the proper functions of the office, he will, it is believed, see, on further consideration, that the views he so justly condemns are in reality the natural consequence of the theory that the lay councillors of the Church are presbyters or true elders—that is, that

they belong to an order of which, according to the Apostle, every member, without exception, ought to be "apt to teach." It is not by emphasising, as he proposes to do, the epithet *ruling*, but by getting rid of the fallacy lurking in the designation *elder*, and in the term *ordination*, that the evil is to be met.

THE END.

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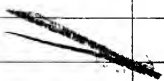


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